

**A LATE 4TH TO EARLY 3RD MILLENNIUM BC GRAVE
IN HAJJIABAD-VARAMIN
(JIROFT, SOUTH-EASTERN IRAN):
DEFINING A NEW PERIOD OF THE HALIL RUD
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE**

BY

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Abstract: A large catacomb grave was recently excavated in Hajjiabad-Varamin, in the Halil Rud valley (Kerman province, Iran). Dated from the late 4th to the early 3rd millennium BC, the burial is abundantly furnished with 90 artefacts, which provide for the first time an insight into the local material (ceramic) assemblage used in the Halil Rud valley around 3000 BC. The ceramics (here fully published) help to define a new ceramic horizon (which we propose to call “Varamin Period”), between the 4th millennium BC Aliabad wares horizon and the c. mid-3rd millennium BC occupation periods of Konar Sandal South. The analysis of the spatial distribution of the grave furnishings also reveals aspects of the final stages of the funeral, as well as some immaterial implications hidden behind the material evidence.

Keywords: Halil Rud civilization, Jiroft cemeteries, Varamin, Bronze Age of south-eastern Iran, funerary practices

1. Introduction: the site of Hajjiabad-Varamin

The Hajjiabad-Varamin archaeological area (28°25'2.77"N; 57°43'28.33"E), 6,5 km south-west of Konar Sandal South (see Figs. 1 and 2), is one of the largest archaeological settlements in the Halil Rud valley. The materials brought to surface by erosion and, unfortunately, by recent lootings, indicate that the site was occupied continuously from the (late 5th ?) early 4th to the second half of the 3rd millennium BC (and later hosted an important Islamic occupation). The protohistoric settlement

seems to have reached its maximum extension in the first half of the 3rd millennium BC, at the time when Konar Sandal South started to be occupied (Madjidzadeh & Pittman 2008).

The Hajjiabad-Varamin archaeological area displays Mahtoutabad I (Vidale & Desset 2013), Aliabad and Konar Sandal South (mid-late 3rd millennium BC) related ceramics. To these three classes, we may now add a local ceramic assemblage (up to now, largely unknown and found also in Marjan-Varamin and Riganbar) datable to the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 3rd millennium BC. This pottery features on large sections of the site surface and in the substantial group of vessels found in the grave that is the subject of this paper. This pottery defines a ‘Varamin Period’ which probably represents one of the main roots of the brilliant and much discussed 3rd millennium BC Halil Rud or Marhashi urban civilization. Besides Hajjiabad-Varamin, important aspects of this civilization have been intensively explored through the excavations at Konar Sandal south, in the deepest layers of Konar Sandal north and in the destroyed graveyards located at Mahtoutabad (Mahtoutabad IV) and nearby the mounds of Qaleh Koutchek.

In 2017, one of the present authors (N. Eskandari) opened two trenches in the western part of the Hajjiabad-Varamin archaeological area (Eskandari *et al.* forthcoming)¹ (Fig. 3a and Fig. 3b). In Trench I, he identified a sequence of layers dated through radiocarbon from the mid-4th to the beginning of the 3rd millennium BC. In Trench II was excavated a large catacomb burial labelled Grave 1 (see Figs. 4 and 5). Attributed to the late 4th-early 3rd millennium BC, it contained some 90 artefacts (see below). This grave shows that the western part of the mounds of Hajjiabad-Varamin, at the time, was used as a graveyard. At Hajjiabad-Varamin, like in many other contemporary and more recent sites (such as Shahr-i Sokhta, Shahdad and Mahtoutabad IV), Grave 1 was probably part of a wide specialized funerary area. Preliminary observations suggest the possibility that the contemporary burial ground extended, in the northern part of the site, for c. 300 m

¹ The first season of the excavation at the site of Varamin was carried out by the University of Jiroft, an expedition headed by N. Eskandari, with the collaboration of Tübingen University (Prof. P. Pfälzner) and ICAR. The results of the fieldwork are in press (Eskandari *et al.* forthcoming), where the “Varamin Culture” is fully characterized. Herein, we present Grave 1 and its burial goods in general. In this paper, however, we discuss the Varamin material culture in the cultural sequence of the Halil Valley, the spatial distribution of the grave furnishings, the grave structure and the stages of the funeral as well as the technology of the goods.

in west-east direction, and not less than 100 m in direction south-north. The cemetery might have hosted hundreds of burials, at present locally exposed by strong erosion.

After a burial found in the plundered area of Mahtoutabad in 2009 (Desset *et al.* 2017), dated to the second-half of the 3rd millennium BC, Grave 1 of Hajjiabad-Varamin is the second one to have been scientifically excavated in the Halil Rud valley. Together with another grave excavated in the Eastern Jazmurian, in the site of Spidej (Grave 125, Heydari *et al.* 2019), Hajjiabad-Varamin Grave 1 sheds a new light on the material assemblage used in south-eastern Iran between the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 3rd millennium BC (in particular, in the Kerman region), with important and new typo-chronological implications.

Both graves (Spidej and Hajjiabad-Varamin) confirm the importance of excavating well preserved funerary contexts (as *ensembles clos*), abundantly furnished with complete and contemporary ceramic groups. Besides observing some aspects of the local funerary rituals, this enables one to reconstruct reliable ceramic typo-chronological sequences needed as reference when dealing with entire regions that, to a large extent, are still archaeological blanks.

2. Grave 1

For 25 days, Nasir Eskandari and Meysam Shahsavari (supervisor of the trench) excavated Trench II and Grave 1, contained in its limits, in February 2017 (Figs. 4 and 5). Located in the western part of the archaeological area, Grave 1 is a catacomb-type grave with a rectangular access shaft (1,5 m × 0,7 m; Stage 1 in the sequence of events we have reconstructed) located on the eastern side. It was recorded about 90 cm below the current surface of the site, and was preserved only to a height of 1 m. The shaft led to a big sub-circular chamber (c. 3,2 m N/S; 2,9 m W/E; Stage 2), 20 cm lower, whose elliptical vault, although collapsed, could be mapped 1,1 / 1,2 m above the floor of the grave. Along the walls of the shaft it was also possible to observe the vertical traces of the picks used to dig the local sediments.

Since only some fragments of skull, teeth and coxal bones were preserved (See Fig. 5.7), the original position of the body was hypothetically located in the eastern part of the grave chamber, probably in a flexed position, and facing the entrance. After the deposition of the corpse, two large clusters of ceramics were piled up along the northern and southern sides of the chamber, leaving an empty space in the center. Such gap was probably

used as a pathway between the entrance and the rear where the deceased was put to rest (events ascribed to Stage 3). The entrance of the chamber was then closed maybe with a *chineh* wall (Stage 4), while the shaft was filled with soft sediments, clearly different from the substratum where the shaft had been dug out (Stage 5). Three ceramic vessels were inserted in the filling of the shaft: first n° 59 at the bottom, then n° 36 and n° 37 at the level where the shaft was first recognized during the excavation.

It is not clear where exactly was the trampling surface of the graveyard from which the pit was dug out some 5000 years ago. However, during the first days of the excavation, about half a meter above the hypothesized top of the chamber's vault, and c. half a meter below the current surface, two large stones were found (section in Fig. 4). One stood above the point of junction between the shaft and the chamber, while the other was located above the north-eastern corner of the chamber (perhaps indicating the location of the head of the dead?). If these stones were indeed part of the grave's architecture, they might have been placed on surface as grave markers (Stage 6 event). After the closure of the grave, post-depositional processes interfered, including in first place the collapse of the vault. This caused the filling of the chamber and the breakage of the uppermost ceramics of the two groups, and the tilting of some of them (Stage 7). Due to chemical decay and dissolution, bone remains almost completely disappeared.

This catacomb structure corresponds to the most frequent type of graves used in south-eastern Iran for most part of the 4th and 3rd millennium BC: at the graveyards of Shahr-i Sokhta, Spidej, Saidabad / Bampur 14, Mahtoutabad and Qaleh Koutchek (this was probably also the case in Shahdad) while, in contrast, the Keshik graves in Baluchistan have a surprising stone slabs gallery structure.

Seven samples from Grave 1 were analyzed for C14 dating, four human teeth and three charred elements. The human remains did not provide any collagen while charcoal gave unreasonable modern dates. Thus, unfortunately no radiocarbon dating is available for the grave (Eskandari *et al.* forthcoming).

3. Funerary furnishings: description, technology and comparisons

All in all, Grave 1 contained 90 artefacts (see Figs. 6 to 17). They are: 81 ceramic vessels; 6 copper-based artefacts (Fig. 16; one spearhead, n° 25, three thin leaf-shaped objects, n° 38, 39 and 40, one flat axe, n° 24 and one vessel, n° 27); two stone beads (a carnelian bead, n° 90, and the banded limestone bead n° 45); and one cockle shell, n° 44. The pottery

includes 3 main formal types: hemispherical bowls, bell-like beakers and pots, and globular jars with everted rims. Only 24 out of the 81 ceramics (less than 30%) are painted. As this is the first grave documented up to now in Varamin, at present little can be said about the relative wealth of its funerary offers. However, preliminary comparisons with contemporary graves in other early Bronze Age sites (considering, somehow arbitrarily, the number of objects as a proxy of richness) may give some indications.

At Shahr-i Sokhta, 45 graves were dated of the first period of occupation (c. 3000-2900 BC). Most of them contained from one to 11 artefacts, while the most abundantly furnished grave displayed 16 objects (Bonora *et al.* 2000: 514). Sajjadi (2009: 17) writes that among the graves excavated by the Iranian team in Shahr-i Sokhta (without details about their dating), 29% contained one to three artefacts, 28% four to eight artefacts, 16% nine to 16 artefacts, 2% from 16 to 20 artefacts, and 2% 21 to 50 items. At Spidej, the richest grave excavated (Grave 125, dated to the late 4th to early 3rd millennium BC; Heydari *et al.* 2019) contained 59 artefacts; while Rahbar (2017) excavated in Bampur 14 / Saidabad 15 graves dated from 3000 to 2300 BC, some of which contained more than 100 artefacts. In Damin, the grave published by Tosi (1970), probably to be dated of the 1st half or the middle of the 3rd millennium BC, contained 46 artefacts (41 ceramics, five metallic items and one stone column). In the light of these comparisons, Hajjiabad-Varamin Grave 1 seems to fall on the side of the relatively well-furnished graves. Nonetheless, in order to substantiate this first impression, we will need to excavate more graves datable c. 3000 BC.

Ceramics (Figs. 6-15)

Among the 81 ceramic vessels, some specimens can be related to areas and sites east of the Halil Rud valley, such as Baluchistan, Makran or Sistan, while many types are documented here for the first time. In fact, these latter types seem to belong to a more local assemblage, so far, to a large extent, very partially described. The complete absence of any Western- or Uruk/Proto-Elamite-related ceramics, as those found in the previously published Mahtoutabad III assemblage² is intriguing and is commented below. Among the 81 ceramic vessels, 60 could be checked for technological observations. In the following pages, we will describe the ceramics according to the basic criterion of Shepard 1968, i.e. proceeding

² See Desset *et al.* 2013.

from the simpler open forms to the more complex and restricted or closed ones (complexity in profile being defined by the number and combination of inflection and corner points in the pots contour).

Simple truncated-conical to hemispherical bowls: Figs. 6 and 7, n° 14, 16, 19, 21, 26, 35, 37, 43, 56, 59, 69, 73, 74, 75, 82, 83, 86, 88, 89.

While the specimens in Fig. 6 are truncated-cone shaped to hemispherical and low, those in Fig. 7 are more clearly hemispherical and taller. The base is simple and flat. Usually made with a fine buff ware, apparently including a fine sandy component, they range from 9 to 22 cm in height, with a mouth diameter wavering from 20 to 36 cm. They were made with different technical processes, namely coiling (n° 14, 75, 82), wheel-throwing (n° 19, 21, 37, 74, 83, 86) or molding (n° 16, 35, 56, 69, 73, 88, 89). The molded examples were very frequently regularised with an upper coil applied to form the rim. After this step, many of these bowls were either turned or trimmed up to 1/3 of the height, to mid-height or even to the rim. Some bowls described in the Mahtoutabad III assemblage look rather similar to those of Grave 1 (Desset *et al.* 2013, fig. 18 n° 10/11; see Fig. 21).

Vessels n° 14 and 35 have inner painted designs: three rows of W-M patterns are visible on n° 14 (all in all, the W-M pattern appears in n° 2, 14, 49 and 54 and seems to distinguish the Kerman pottery during the Varamin Period). Under the rim of n° 35 hangs a hatched wavy pattern, usually found on the outer surface in Early Baluchi grey wares (cf. n° 32 and 52; see below). In this perspective, n° 35 looks like a local variation (buff ware and inner hatched wavy pattern) of the early grey wares of the Baluchistan hinterland (grey ware and outer hatched wavy pattern).

Some of these simple hemispherical bowls, like n° 56, seem to be the precursors of the second half of the 3rd millennium BC 'standard bowls', so common in the settlement layers of Konar Sandal south (Madjidzadeh & Pittman 2008: Fig. 26, bottom row), and present also in the grave excavated in Mahtoutabad (Desset *et al.* 2017: Pl. 14, a-d). Comparisons are also possible with Tepe Yahya, phase IVC2 (Potts 2001: Fig. 1.13f).

A miniature hemispherical bowl and other small bowls with a scorpion painted in the interior: Fig. 8, n° 81, 29, 47, 50.

N° 81 is a 3 cm high bowl displaying an inner variation of the swastika-like pattern with a central cross and zig zag lines, reminding of the decoration used inside the footed pot n° 31. The manufacturing technique is

uncertain. Buff ware bowls n° 29, 47 and 50 are 6 to 7 cm high, with a mouth diameter of ca. 10 cm, and have fine sandy inclusions. They share a flat base, a weak inflection point at mid-height and a sub-vertical upper wall ending on a simple rim. They were all wheel-thrown and then turned on the base (n° 47 was clearly fired in a pile). Like in many other vessels of this assemblage, a line emphasizes the rim, while the interior hosts a 'fatty scorpion'. This is probably the origin of the scorpion decorative pattern well-attested in South-eastern Iran in the mid-3rd / second half of the 3rd millennium BC (see for example a Bampur IV.1 sherd, de Cardi 1970: Fig. 24, n° 201; or a canister jar found in the grave of Damin, Tosi 1970: Fig. 5). The same design is known in Baluchistan: see a Makran IIIa bowl (Besenval 2011: Fig. 82), in Bampur 14 / Saidabad (Rahbar 2003; objects n° 12.7 and 32.10) and in Chegerdak (M. Heydari, personal communication), where several small 'fatty scorpions' are painted around a central pattern (see Fig. 20). Such scorpions are the only animal designs on the ceramics of Grave 1. They also feature inside vessels n° 46 and n° 29, 40 and 57. We are tempted to imagine that behind this pattern may lay a visual game – a dangerous and poisonous animal hidden below food or beverages, to be discovered only after consumption, somehow like in a Bernard Palissy's Rustic Ware plate (Shell 2005). On a more abstract level, such scorpions are a powerful natural symbol that subverts the artificial field of the pot, sharing, however, the rotational nature of its creation.

Eastern-related hemispherical bowls: Fig. 8, n° 1, 32 and 52.

These 3 fine, clinky grey ware hemispherical bowls are discussed separately because of their cross-cultural implications. They bear grey/brown painted patterns (including the recurrent swastika pattern of n° 1) and the secondary patterns impressed during firing, due to the stacking of ceramics of the same form. Both n° 32 and n° 52 display on their outer surface the suspended wavy hatched pattern between two horizontal lines, while a more complex motif was painted inside n° 52 (a four-branched cross or swastika, surrounded by four groups of three lines surmounted by as many hatched arches in a rotational setting). Apparently, these three bowls were wheel-thrown, trimmed on the exterior and later carefully smoothed.

They are a kind of Emir Grey ware (EGW; Wright 1984), while Mutin *et al.* (2017: 142-143) recently proposed the term of Late Shahi Tump (or LST) ware. Dated to the late 4th to early 3rd millennium BC, these ceramics were found mainly in Kech-Maran (Shahi Tump, Miri Qalat and sites

located in the Dasht plain) and Eastern Jazmurian (Bampur, Katukan, Khurab, Fanuch, and Chah Sardu; Bampur 14 / Saidabad: Rahbar 2003; Spidej Grave 125: Heydari *et al.* 2019; Chegerdak and Keshik) areas, with some specimens found also in the most ancient graves excavated in Shahr-i Sokhta (phases 10 and 9; EGW found in 60% of the 45 graves; Bonora *et al.* 2000: 505) as well as, more rarely, in Tepe Yahya (Potts 2001: Fig. 1.6k / IVC2 and Fig. 3.7 f and g / IVB6 intrusive, black on buff).

Mainly produced in Kech-Makran and Eastern Jazmurian (in this perspective 'Early Baluchi' grey ware would be a better label than LST) and found as 'prestige' vessels in relatively rich graves (at least in Shahr-i Sokhta, Mutin *et al.* 2017), this pottery was uncommon (and exotic) in Kerman, like it was at Tepe Yahya (for comparisons, see Fig. 21).

Bell-like beakers and pots: Figs. 9 and 10, n° 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, 48, 65, 66, 67, 68, 72, 77, 78, 85, 87.

These buff ware beakers and pots, distinguished by an unmistakable open, bell-like contour, ranged from 18 to 42 cm in height, with mouth diameters ranging from 20 to 43 cm. Relatively tall, with a flat base, they show a more or less perceptible inflection or corner point in the lower third or at mid-height (probably where the lower part was joined to the upper part), and a simple rim. Some were coil-built and shaped on the potter's wheel, while others seem to have been directly thrown on the wheel. They were often trimmed or turned up to 1/3 or half of the height.

Fig. 9, n° 9 has a circular hole in the centre of the base. Fig. 10, n° 5 is the only painted pot of this type. It shows a black geometric design (frieze of lozenges with inner hatched hourglass patterns) between the rim and two horizontal lines (cf., for the decorative pattern, Makran ceramics of Periods II and IIIa; Besenval 2011: Fig. 81). It also shows an inner oblique pattern of tiny sprinkled droplets of black paint, also visible on the vessel illustrated in Fig. 13, n° 30.

Deep bowls with vertical or restricted walls (sub-globular): Fig. 11, n° 4, 11, 34, 60, 70, 76.

Ranging from 14 to 19 cm in height, with a mouth diameter from 15 to 26 cm, these bowls are unpainted. Fig. 11 illustrates transitions from the simple hemispherical bowls discussed above (Figs. 6-9), to the more restricted forms of two sub-globular bowls in Fig. 11, n° 11 and 76. Also in this case, different technical processes were used to produce this group:

coiling (n° 70 and 76), wheel-throwing (n° 4 and 11) or molding with a coiled rim (n° 34). Most of them were then trimmed or turned up to the base, to 1/3rd of the height, to mid-height or up to just below the rim.

Sub-cylindrical and sub-globular small bowls: Fig. 12, n° 33, 63, 71; 36, 51, 53, 57, 61, 62, 64, 79, 80.

N° 33, 63, 71 (on top of Fig. 12) are small sub-cylindrical bowls, with a flat base, a slight carination and a sub-vertical upper wall ending on a simple rim. N° 33 and 63 were wheel-thrown and then turned on the base. N° 71 can be compared to a plain buff ware bowl found in Tepe Yahya IVC1 (Potts 2001: Fig. 2.27, B). The rest of the pots in Fig. 12 are more sub-globular in contour. Ranging from 7 to 10 cm in height, with a mouth diameter from 6,5 to 10 cm, these fine buff ware pots have a sandy temper. Some of them have stacking marks (like n° 57 and 79). They were all wheel-thrown and then trimmed up to different heights on their outer surface (after which the trimming traces were sometimes smoothed).

N° 51, 57 and 79 are similarly decorated on their outer surface with three black zig zag lines framed between the rim and two horizontal lines, while n° 80 displays two rows of downward hatched wavy patterns (reminding of the two rows of upward hatched triangles in n° 28). Comparisons (see Fig. 20) for these decorated sub-globular small bowls can be found in the Mahtoutabad III assemblage (Desset *et al.* 2013: Fig. 22), on a black on buff example at Tepe Yahya IVC2 (Potts 2001: Fig. 1.44, C and Mutin 2013: Fig. 3.52, n° 1) as well as in some graves in Shahr-i Sokhta Period I (Bonora *et al.* 2000: Fig. 4) and in Baluchistan, with inward-flected carinated walls: in the Rudbar area (Stein 1937: Pl. 20 Kal.1), a sherd with three or four black zig zag lines within two horizontal lines; and in Bampur 14 / Saidabad (Rahbar 2003: Pl. 17), where several slightly carinated bowls are decorated with two black zig zag lines equally framed between horizontal lines. Probably a Baluchi variation of this pattern was present in Bampur 14 / Saidabad, with a square pattern of four to five lines included by horizontal lines, also to be found in Spidej, Grave 125 (Heydari *et al.* 2019: Fig. 15). In this latter context, several small bowls share square or rectangular frames of three to four lines, within horizontal lines.

Painted footed bowls and bell-like pots: Fig. 13, n° 30, 31, 46, 49, 55, 58.

This Figure collects some specimens of the above described groups which are distinguished by a higher degree of elaboration, namely a raised

applied foot (but for n° 49) and the presence of painted designs. The high footed conical beaker n° 58 is probably one of the last occurrences of the Aliabad-related beakers used in Kerman (Tal-i Iblis IV, Mahtoutabad I-II, Khaje Askar graves) (Soleimani *et al.* 2016) and Kech-Makran (II, IIIa) around mid-4th millennium BC³. It is the only possible case of a formal transition currently perceptible between the Aliabad and Varamin Periods ceramic assemblages. This suggests that the Varamin Period – at least in our preliminary terms of observation, see below – could have been a break from the Aliabad ceramic tradition in Kerman province. Coiled on the potter's wheel, with a base added in a following step, this vessel displays an inner elementary wavy pattern under the rim.

Footed hemispherical bowls n° 31, 46 and 55 share a footed base with inner and outer black-painted designs. N° 31 shows outside, under the rim, the common hatched wavy pattern found also on Early Baluchi grey wares, such as n° 32 and n° 52, while the inner decoration may be a variation of the swastika-like pattern with semi-circular additions. Both n° 46 and n° 55 are decorated externally with a frieze of lozenges (hatched in the case of n° 55) framed between horizontal lines, while n° 55 bears inside three Maltese crosses (in Grave 1, only attested on this vessel, but found on other sherds on the site's surface) around a hourglass motif. The frieze of hatched lozenges painted on the outer surface of n° 55 reminds (surprisingly) of Tal-i Iblis Period I (Bard Sir) painted sherds (Caldwell 1967: 208, Fig. 3, bottom left). It was also found on black on buff wares at Tepe Yahya (Beale 1986: 60, d and I, and Fig. 4.22, black on buff ware, Period VB; Potts 2001: Fig. 4.17 d, and Mutin 2013: Fig. 3.43, n° 4, Yahya IVB5; see Fig. 20). N° 46 shows 4 'fatty scorpions' (a design discussed above) which somehow recall the swastika-like pattern. N° 46 and 55 were wheel-thrown, with an annular base added in a leather-like state of hardness, and then turned along the base (n° 46) or up to 2/3 of the height (n° 55).

Bell-like pots n° 30 and 49 display bichrome (black and red) painted patterns. In n° 30, one sees two metopes including hatched hourglasses, framed by three semi-circular motifs on both sides; while on the squat version n° 49, the metopes contain horizontal hatched hourglasses⁴ alternating with rows of three W/M-like designs, in both cases framed between

³ See Caldwell 1967, Vidale & Desset 2013, Soleimani *et al.* 2016, and Besenval 2011 for these references.

⁴ For this hourglass pattern, see Stein 1937: Pl. 19 Hus. 472 (Chah Hosseini).

horizontal black and red lines. N° 30 was wheel-thrown, with an annular ring added on the base afterwards. N° 49 may be related to a black on buff vessel found in Tepe Yahya IVC2 (Potts 2001: Fig. 1.58, n° A) while n° 30 may remind of designs used at Spidej, Grave 125 (see Fig. 20).

Globular jars with everted rim: Fig. 14, n° 2, 6, 7, 42, 84.

Ranging from 20 to 50 cm in height, with mouth diameters ranging from 10 to 20 cm width, these globular jars were made in buff ware with clays suggesting a sandy component. They have a flat base, straight walls turning to globular in their mid-upper part and a more or less everted rim (completely absent in the large hole-mouth jar n° 84). N° 6 and 42 were coiled on the potter's wheel. N° 42 was turned on the base. On the shoulder of n° 2, one sees a frieze of four W/M patterns, alternating with two vertical lines framed on both sides by three hatched triangles.

Painted globular jars: Fig. 15, n° 3, 28.

N° 3 and 28 are globular jars with everted rim. N° 3 was coiled and then trimmed up to the shoulder, while n° 28 was wheel-thrown and smoothed on its lower part. N° 3 presents a bichrome decoration on a red background: 3 horizontal black lines with a black zig zag line painted between the two uppermost horizontal ones. N° 28 shows, between two horizontal lines, two rows of upward hatched triangles (from above, these triangles form a star). N° 28 (Fig. 20) is very similar to a pot of the catalogue published by Madjidzadeh (2003: 160, lower row) as well as to another vase from Tepe Yahya IVC1 (brown on cream slipped buff ware: Potts 2001: Fig. 2.12, a and Mutin 2013: Fig. 3.64, 6). A less direct comparison may be found in a Bard Sir period (Iblis I) sherd found in Tal-i Iblis (Caldwell 1967: 125: Fig. 8).

Canister-like pot: Fig. 15, n° 54.

Vessel n° 54 is a unique small canister-like pot, made in two sections – body and shoulder – on the potter's wheel. It belongs to the Nal or Sohr Damb tradition (Period II: 3100-2800/2700 BC). These wares were encountered at Shahr-i Sokhta Period I, Mundigak, Said Qala Tepe and Tepe Yahya (Cortesi *et al.* 2008: 9-14; Mutin 2013: 116-117; Lombardo & Vidale 2014: cat. 14, 38, 39, 57-59). While the shape reminds several examples from Shahr-i Sokhta (comparisons summarized in Fig. 21), the

two black-painted rows of W/M-like patterns and zig-zags are a local variation.

Copper-based artefacts (Fig. 16 and Fig. 22 for comparisons)

In Hajjiabad-Varamin Grave n° 1 were found six copper-based artefacts, illustrated in Fig. 16. This may remind of other late 4th to mid-3rd graves of the macro-region, which contained metal objects. Spidej Grave 125 contained an assemblage of two shaft-hole axes, one flat axe and one knife (Heydari *et al.* 2019), while the Damin grave had one shaft-hole axe, two flat axes, one chisel and one knife (Tosi 1970). In protohistoric south-eastern Iran such artefacts, as a rule, were placed nearby the head of the deceased (in contrast, in the grave excavated in Mahtoutabad and dated to the 2nd half of the 3rd millennium BC, a copper vessel was found nearby the feet of the dead; see Desset *et al.* 2017).

Leaf-shaped oval blades: Fig. 16, n° 38, 39, 40.

These 3 artefacts, whose actual function is still uncertain, given their apparently blunt edges and quite limited thickness, can be compared with others found in Bampur 14 / Saidabad graveyard (Rahbar 2003: Pl. 55, n° 10) and in Grave 754 at Shahr-i Sokhta (Piperno & Salvatori 2007: 325, Fig. 775, 8589), datable to Period I. For other oval, short-tanged blades of the same general type we have to look to the Indus valley. Some copper blades found at Mohenjo-Daro (Sindh, Pakistan) are quite similar, having the same short tang and an oval contour ending in a short, slightly pointed tip (Marshall 1931: Pl. CXXXV, 2, C.1978, and Pl. CXXXVI, 1; but see also slightly different short-tanged oval blades, even though more elongated in the same two illustrations and – always at Mohenjo-Daro – in Mackay 1938: Pl. CXXIX, 11). At Harappa, see the copper blades illustrated in Vats 1941: Pls. CXXI, 20, and CXXIII, 41. Other short-tanged oval blades, but more elongated, were recorded at Chanhudaro (Sindh, Pakistan: Mackay 1943: Pls. LXIII, 2 and 4; LXIV, 1, 2 and 6; specimens in Pl. LXV and LXVII) and possibly at Lothal (Gujarat, India: Rao 1973: 540).

Knife or spear-head: Fig. 16, n° 25.

This artefact finds comparisons in Tepe Yahya IVC2 (Potts 2001: Fig. 1.26), Khaje Askar (Alidadi Soleimani *et al.* 2016: Fig. 13 D),

Chegerdak (M. Heydari, personal communication), Bampur 14 / Saidabad (Rahbar 2003: Pl. 56), Spidej grave 125 (Heydari *et al.* 2019: artefact n° 53), Khurab (Stein 1937: Pl. 18 Khur.F.i.261) and Damin (Tosi 1970: Fig. 18.c). In Shahdad (Hakemi 1997: 639-640), several artefacts may be considered as later examples of this type of objects. Later specimens of the type are also common in the Indus valley, particularly at Chanhü-Daro (Mackay 1943: Pls. LXII, 17; LXIII, 4, 5; LXIV, 3; LXV, 3-6; LXVI, 14-16; LXXII, 1, 2). The same object is also present at Harappa (Vats 1941: Pl. CXXI, 21) and at Mohenjo-Daro (Mackay 1938: Pls. CXIII, 7; CXVII, 8; CXXIX, 1; CXXXIII, 34).

Flat trapeze-like axe: Fig. 16, n° 24.

This artefact is also known at Chegerdak (M. Heydari, personal communication), at Spidej in Grave 125 (Heydari *et al.* 2019: artefact n° 52), at Katukan (Stein 1937: Pl. 18, Kat 016) and Damin (Tosi 1970: Fig. 17c). In Shahdad (Meier 2015: cat. 173-178), several artefacts may be considered as later examples of this type of objects. Although Indus specimens of the same type are, on the whole, more rectangular than trapezoidal (e.g., at Mohenjo-Daro, Marshall 1931: Pls. CXXXVIII, 1 and CXXXIX, 1; Mackay 1943: CXIII, 4-5; CXVII, 3; CXX, 29-26; CXXII, 8, 9 and 13; CXXVI, 4) a few specimens are closer to the axe from our Grave n° 1 (Mackay 1943: CXX, 28, 30; CXXII, 7; and specimens at Pl. CXXXI, 21-22 and 34-36).

Low hemispherical bowl: Fig. 16, n° 27.

This copper bowl has a low umbilicated base, a feature absent in the Indus repertory as well as it does not feature in the abundant inventory of the copper vessels found at Shahdad. For the rest, its very simple shape prevents pertinent comparisons.

Stone beads (Fig. 17)

Banded limestone lozenge-shaped bead: Fig. 17, n° 45.

Lozenge-shapes flat beads are frequently found in the burials of Shahr-i Sokhta, Period I. The material is variable (lapis lazuli or more often chalcedony), as is the association with other types of beads. See, in Piperno & Salvatori 2007: Grave 708/7553 (p. 242); Grave 710/7576 (p. 245); Grave

747/8509 (p. 315); Grave 748/8514 (p. 316); Grave 754/ 8555 (p. 325); Grave 750/8561 (p. 326-327). A single lozenge-like lapis lazuli bead was also found in Grave 49 Inf. (p. 104, 6565), datable to mid-3rd millennium BC. These beads are also attested in Spidej (Grave 125, Heydari *et al.* 2019: artefact n° 54), ascribed to the early 3rd millennium BC, and Bampur 14 / Saidabad (Rahbar 2003: Pl. 56).

Carnelian bead: Fig. 17, n° 90.

The carnelian bead n° 90 is shaped as a flat biconical disk with a sharp corner point. Beads of this material and shape are much rarer than those above commented. Grave 749 at Shahr-i Sokhta (Piperno & Salvatori 2007: 320, 8527d, datable to late Period I) contained a single specimen.

A shell (Fig. 17 and Fig. 22 for comparisons)

Cockle shell (*Anadara* sp.⁵): Fig. 17, n° 44.

A cockle shell was frequently deposited in 4th and 3rd millennium BC graves of south-eastern Iran such as in Khaje Askar (Alidadi Soleimani *et al.* 2016: Fig. 14, n° D and E) and in the Bampur 14 / Saidabad graveyard (Rahbar 2003: Pl. 56), probably to be used as a cosmetic container. This obviously reminds of Early Dynastic period Mesopotamia (notably in Abu Salabikh, Bismaya, Fara, Kish, Tello, Ubaid and Ur). In this last site, in the Royal Cemetery, real *Cardium* and their gold replica were used to store greenish or bluish secondary copper minerals (see Moorey 1994: 133-134 and Hauptmann *et al.* 2016; for cosmetic pigments at Shahr-i Sokhta and references see Vidale *et al.* 2016). Deposited probably nearby the head of the deceased, the cockle shell in Hajjiabad-Varamin Grave 1 also preserved on its inner surface residues of a greenish powder which, so far, could not be analysed.

4. Spatial analysis and some aspects of the funerary practices

The analysis of the spatial distribution of the funerary furnishing of a grave is only pertinent when this last is well-preserved and properly excavated, as it is the case for Hajjiabad-Varamin Grave 1 (Binford 1971:

⁵ We thank here Chloé Martin and Marjan Mashkour (Musée national d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris) for this identification.

14; see Heydari *et al.* 2019, for a contemporary example in Spidej graveyard). In Hajjiabad-Varamin Grave 1, the most obvious and important spatial feature is the bipartition of the funerary assemblage in two symmetric clusters (Fig. 18), a northern one (35 artefacts) and a southern one (51 artefacts), with one bowl located just nearby the deceased in the centre (n° 43) and three bowls placed in the shaft, apparently in front of the closure of the chamber (n° 36, 37, 59). The stacking of series of bell-like pots, bowls and beakers of decreasing size in vertical piles was a recurrent behaviour of the last ritual events. This might suggest that such vessels, in that contingency, did not contain solid food, other materials of substantial volumes or beverages; or that these materials had been previously removed.

The northern and southern clusters share some features. In both groups, three globular jars were deposited close to one another (n° 6, 84, 28 in the northern cluster; n° 2, 3, and 7 in the southern one). In each cluster, globular jars are accompanied by two painted bowls (n° 32 and 35 in the northern cluster; n° 1 and 52 in the southern one, in both cases near the entrance) and one polychrome painted bell-like pot (n° 30 in the northern cluster; n° 49 in the southern one).

But there are also some meaningful differences. The non-ceramic artefacts (n° 24, 25, 27, 38, 39, 40, 44, 45), including the copper ones and the cockle shell (with the exception of carnelian bead n° 90), cluster in the north-eastern part of the chamber, near the presumed location of the head (like in Spidej Grave n° 125). In the northern cluster, moreover, there were three small bowls with 'fatty scorpions' painted inside (n° 29, 47 and 50) located close to one another. Moreover, the superimposed piles of bell-like beakers and pots and bowls are more present in the southern group.

Finally, the three bowls deposited in the shaft in front of the closing wall may remind of the pots and bones found in the same position in the 2400-2200 BC grave excavated in Mahtoutabad (Desset *et al.* 2017): the broken pot n° 59 in Hajjiabad-Varamin Grave 1 corresponds to broken vessel f in the Mahtoutabad grave.

In the light of the above, the interior of Hajjiabad-Varamin Grave 1 may be ideally subdivided in three areas (Fig. 19):

- The eastern end of the chamber, hosting the physical remains of the deceased and representing, through valuable non-ceramic offers, some aspects of his/her social personality.
- The western part of the chamber. Here the two main clusters of offerings (northern and southern) could have been offerings for the afterlife

or/and the remains of a funerary banquet. Through this indirect lens, the offers would display the social affiliations relating the dead to the living community. The two clusters of artefacts might have been separated mainly by the gap needed to bring in the corpse and the objects, or reflected some dichotomy in the participants to the funeral that cannot be better focused.

- The last area is the access shaft, where some specific opening and closing practices were probably held.

5. The cultural context of Hajjiabad-Varamin Grave 1

One of the main purposes of the first season in Hajjiabad-Varamin in 2017 was to determine the cultural sequence of the site (Eskandari *et al.* forthcoming). To reach this aim, a stratigraphic trench (named Trench I) was opened on the top of the highest mound of the site (Fig. 3). This stratigraphic trench was explored to the depth of 3.2 m, but the virgin soil was not reached. A cultural sequence from the mid-4th to early 3rd millennium BC was determined with the identification of two occupation periods: the already known Aliabad/Iblis IV culture (Late Chalcolithic) and a hitherto unknown period (called here Varamin Period) dated from 3300/3200 to 2800 BC.

This dating is based on the ¹⁴C results of fourteen samples from Trench I, analyzed at the Klaus-Tschira-Archaeometry-Center (Mannheim) of the University of Heidelberg. From the 14 samples from Trench 1, 12 produced valuable and interesting results, while two resulted in modern dates. Three ¹⁴C dated samples were from Aliabad occupation layers, giving a range from the second to the third quarters of the 4th millennium BC. The recovered diagnostic potsherds also confirm this dating based on comparison with other excavated sites, in Shahdad (Eskandari 2017) and Mahtoutabad (Vidale & Desset 2013). The pottery repertoire of the upper layers in Trench 1 was completely different from the Aliabad ceramics with new techniques, forms and decorations such as oblique wavy and straight lines painted on the inner surface of open vessels (Eskandari *et al.* forthcoming). The upper layers ceramics can be compared to the ceramics from Grave 1, published here, and ascribed to the Varamin period. As said above, these layers were dated from 3300/3200 to 2800 BC thanks to nine ¹⁴C datings.

Comparative framework (Figs. 20-22)

The material comparisons currently available link Hajjiabad-Varamin Grave 1, and the Halil Rud valley Varamin Period in general, to Mahtoutabad III (painted local ceramics), Tepe Yahya IVC2/1, Shahr-i Sokhta I, some of the graves in Bampur 14 / Saidabad and Chegerdak, Spidej Grave 125, Makran IIIa and Nal/Sohr Damb II, confirming the dating around 3000 BC (c. 3200 to 2900/2800 BC). All in all, the ceramics of Hajjiabad-Varamin Grave 1 gives us an exceptional insight to the local and eastern-related ceramic assemblage in Kerman province around 3000 BC, with a coherent archaeological context and complete ceramic shapes.

The copper-based artefacts, as far as we can presently say, and before any analytical evidence, belong to a southern-Iranian sphere of interaction linking the Halil Rud valley to Sistan and the western edge of the Dasht-i Lut. Moreover, they also show – much more than the pottery – important links with the later metallurgical tradition of the Indus valley early urban world (c. 2600-1900 BC), whose meanings and historical implications wait for reliable explanations.

Definition of the Varamin ceramic Period

Grave 1 at Hajjiabad-Varamin illustrates the local ceramic tradition in the late 4th to early 3rd millennium BC, so far discontinuously observed in Tepe Yahya IVC/IVB, on the surface of many looted sites in the Halil Rud valley and in the deposits of Mahtoutabad III, here mingled as a minor component (2 to 3 %) of the Uruk- or Proto-Elamite related assemblage⁶. This confirms that the Uruk- or Proto-Elamite-related ceramics observed in Mahtoutabad III were intrusive in the Halil Rud valley. As this latter assemblage was found in secondary sediments (alluvial layers alternating with aeolian surfaces), we presume that potsherds came from the dumps of a nearby enclave. Actually, c. 100-200 m south of the destroyed graveyard, on the right bank of the river, on the walls of the looting pits, were visible mud brick walls. This might be the location of a separate enclave, possibly analogous to the oval compound in Godin Tepe, phase VI.1 (where 70% of the material was local and 30% Uruk/Proto-Elamite related)⁷.

⁶ Desset *et al.* 2013: 38-43 and figs. 20-24.

⁷ See Mutin 2013 and Mutin *et al.* 2016: 851 for this distinction between Western-related, Baluch-related and local/Kerman-related assemblages in Tepe Yahya IVC.

The absence of contemporary Western/Uruk/Proto-Elamite related material (such as the bevelled-rim bowls) observed in Grave 1 but also on the whole surface of the Hajjiabad-Varamin archaeological area may lead to two different interpretations:

- 1) Mahtoutabad III (and Yahya IVC2 building) assemblage was a Western-related material foreign enclave in a completely independent local background. Kerman area would then be the real eastern border of the Uruk/Proto-Elamite phenomenon (which would only be present beyond through limited enclaves, like Kale Kub nearby Ferdows, recently excavated by H. Azizi), especially when comparing the Varamin period assemblage to its contemporary and immediate western Banesh neighbour in Fars. Historic reasons lay maybe behind this material discrepancy.
- 2) Some considerations also lead us to think that the whole Varamin period local and Eastern-related ceramic assemblage observed on the surface of Hajjiabad-Varamin (and in other sites such as Marjan-Varamin and Riganbar) only comes from looted graves. Perhaps this complete absence of Western/Uruk/Proto-Elamite related material is not to be explained through specific historical reason but because of the specific funerary original context of this material. West-related material was perhaps not deemed as proper for burial with the deceased, as they reflected peculiar cultural or economic interactions marginal to the social core of the late 4th / early 3rd millennium BC.

Hajjiabad-Varamin Grave 1 (and Hajjiabad-Varamin in general) may be used to define the local / Kermani assemblage produced from the late 4th to the early 3rd millennium BC, heir of the second and third quarter of the 4th millennium BC Aliabad culture (see in this perspective the conical footed beaker n° 58) and ancestor of the mid and second half of the 3rd millennium BC assemblage found notably in Konar Sandal south and in the graves of Mahtoutabad period IV. For this reason, we propose here to name this epoch as the Varamin period (see Table 1).

Clearly different from Aliabad pottery, the Varamin Period assemblage represents the root of the ceramics used in the Halil Rud valley for the most part of the 3rd millennium BC, with its fine orange to buff ware beakers, bowls or globular jars, usually tempered with fine mineral elements, decorated with mainly monochrome black geometric patterns (with the exception of 'fat scorpions' sometimes painted inside some bowls, such as n° 29, 46, 47 and 50). Large ibexes patterns were also noticed on several sherds found on the surface of Hajjiabad-Varamin, usually in metopes

Table 1: Proposed ceramic periodization of the Halil Rud valley,
from the late 5th to the early 2nd millennium BC
(to be compared with Pfälzner & Alidadi Soleimani 2015: Fig. 13).

Dating	Halil Rud valley ceramic Periods	Varamin Periods
Late 5 th millennium BC ?	Gaz Saleh* (Pre-Mahtoutabad I)	I
Early 4 th millennium BC (4100-3900/3800 BC)	Mahtoutabad I	II
Mid-4 th millennium BC (3900/3800-3300 BC)	Aliabad (Mahtoutabad II)	III
Late 4 th and early 3 rd millennium BC (3300/3200-2800 BC)	Varamin (contemporary but distinct from the Western-related Mahtoutabad III assemblage)	IV
Mid-3 rd millennium and second half of the 3 rd millennium BC (c. 2800-2200 BC; 1 st phase: 2800-2500 BC; 2 nd phase : 2500-2200 BC)	Konar Sandal south (Mahtoutabad IV)	V
Late 3 rd and early 2 nd millennium BC (c. 2200-1900/1800 BC)	Konar Sandal north deep layers period (Madjidzadeh & Pittman 2008: fig. 27) Plain fine buff ware with frequent carinated shapes and the abundant use of sealings on ceramics; similarities with Yahya IVA, Shahr-i Sokhta Period IV and Oxus (Namazga V) assemblages.	Not attested yet in Varamin

* *The Gaz Saleh assemblage is a collection of ceramics found in the extreme south of the Hajjiabad-Varamin mounds, in course of study by the authors. It was thus named from the nearby present village; stratigraphically, it is earlier than Mahtoutabad I and in terms of forms and painted designs looks ancestral to the pottery of this latter horizon.*

between horizontal lines under the rim. The black and red bichromy probably inherited from the Aliabad culture was still partially maintained (see vessels n° 3, 30 and 49).

From this local background, the ceramics used in the Halil Rud valley gradually evolved during the 3rd millennium BC, in diversified forms (with new types such as the ‘scorpion-bowl’, the canister jar, the globular jar with a cylindrical spout and the footed cup) while spreading decorative black painted patterns (progressive increase in the vegetal and animal patterns, with palm-date trees and ibexes, and applied wavy ridges or snake-like ones, as well as excised motifs). The increase in the use of grey wares during the 3rd millennium BC is probably due to an eastern influence, perhaps from Jazmurian, starting as soon as the Varamin Period (vessels n° 1, 32 and 52).

Hajjiabad-Varamin Grave 1 sheds new light on the ceramic sequence of the Halil Rud valley in the late 4th and early 3rd millennium BC, integrating what we previously knew for the 4th millennium BC thanks to the archaeological records of Tal-i Iblis, Tepe Yahya and Mahtoutabad. But still, for a great part of the 3rd millennium BC, i.e. the hypothetical apex of the Halil Rud civilization, the ceramic typo-chronology remains surprisingly under-documented. Certainly, the final publication of the excavations at Konar Sandal south will improve the matter. To tackle with this gap is one of the main objectives of the authors of this paper, through the study, in a near future, of the remaining 3rd millennium BC layers in the Hajjiabad-Varamin archaeological area, and the publication of the materials already documented on the surface of the looted cemetery of Mahtoutabad.

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Appendix: A short technical note on ceramic technology

In absence of X-rays radiography, it is not easy, not fully reliable, to distinguish visually vessels made with coils, thinned and regularized on the potter's wheel (wheel fashioning) from others made on the potter's wheel from a single lump of plastic clay, in a single operation. The criteria here preliminarily applied for this distinction are summarized in the following Table 2.

Of these techniques, molding is certainly the less known and less analytically detected. However, it was certainly in use in the Halil Rud valley since the Mahtoutabad I period (c. 4100-3900/3800 BC or earlier; Vidale & Desset 2013); therefore, the identification in the pottery of Hajjiabad-Varamin around 3000 BC is not surprising. Although none of these indicators can identify with certainty by itself one or the other technique, in the case of the ceramic assemblage here discussed the different lines of evidence were combined with a sufficient coherence to support the interpretations above provided.

Tab. 2. Criteria here applied for preliminarily distinguishing wheel-fashioned from wheel thrown pots.

wheel fashioning of coils	wheel throwing	molding
basically even thickness moving from base to rim	gradually decreasing thickness from base to rim	even thickness in the lower bodies, horizontal joint below the rim
tactile and visual perception under oblique light of rhythmic variations of thickness along the walls, no continuous spiral	continuous rill-like spiral ascending from the centre of the base onwards	small oval or round depressions left by finger impressions, revealed by tactile analysis
general use of trimming (free-hand scraping) of the lower parts, sometimes extending to wider and upper areas of the pot	general use of turning (scraping of the upside-turned pot on a fast-revolving potter's wheel), in general limited to the lowermost part	limited evidence of scraping processes
slightly bumpy lower part, with oblique-oriented facets	more smooth and regular lower part, horizontal scraping marks	smoother, even external bases

The most important consequence is that local vessels like the bowls of Figs. 6 and 7, as well as the bell-like pots of Figs. 9 and 10, and the bowls of Fig. 11, although equivalent in shape, are made with the three different techniques. This suggests that the pots used for the funeral (apparently, mostly made on purpose, given the total absence of use marks) were made by craftsmen of different workshops, and probably from different communities – perhaps a signal of close links between the people buried in the graveyard and the wider rural hinterland. The Early Baluchi pottery of Fig. 8 (n° 1, 32 and 52), and the small globular bowls of Fig. 12, in contrast, are almost regularly wheel-thrown (although their forming process has never been properly studied in depth).

Fig. 23a shows some details of the manufacturing traces visible on the hemispherical bowl of Fig. 7, n° 74. The white arrow, 1, shows the limit of the lower part of the vessel that underwent turning (scraping of the upturned pot on the revolving potter's wheel). While the thin, horizontal traces indicate *per se* the use of a wheel, by turning the base the potters reduced the thicker base required, while the pot was thrown, to ensure its effective centring on the axe of the wheel. The second arrow 2 marks the lower limit of the upper part of the top, of a strip of the vessel fashioned (probably in the last steps of the throwing process) by a fast, repetitive paddling that left thick sequences of vertical impressions. Similar marks

are regularly found on the Early Baluchi grey wares, where, however, they are easily confused with vertical chattering marks due to the turning process.

Fig. 23b shows the interior of the bowl of Fig. 7, n° 19. The picture shows the continuous spiral left by the potter during the final stage of the wheel-throwing process, and the absence of any evidence of the coiling process.

The drawings cannot efficiently render the details of the painting process. Fig. 23c shows a close up view of the fast, competent but quite irregular strokes with which was painted the bell-like pot of Fig. 10, n° 5 (note also the large drops of diluted paint falling from the edge, showing that the pot was painted with the mouth upwards). The interior (Fig. 23d) shows how a sprinkle of the same paint formed a spiral of tiny round droplets. Such spiral demonstrates that when the droplets fall the vessel was still revolving, at the end of the painting sequence, on the potter's wheel. The reason for this gesture, not uncommon on the pots of the Varamin Period production, is unclear. In Pakistan, *dhobis* (washermen) sometimes sprinkle drops of blue paint on the white dresses they just washed, apparently for good luck.

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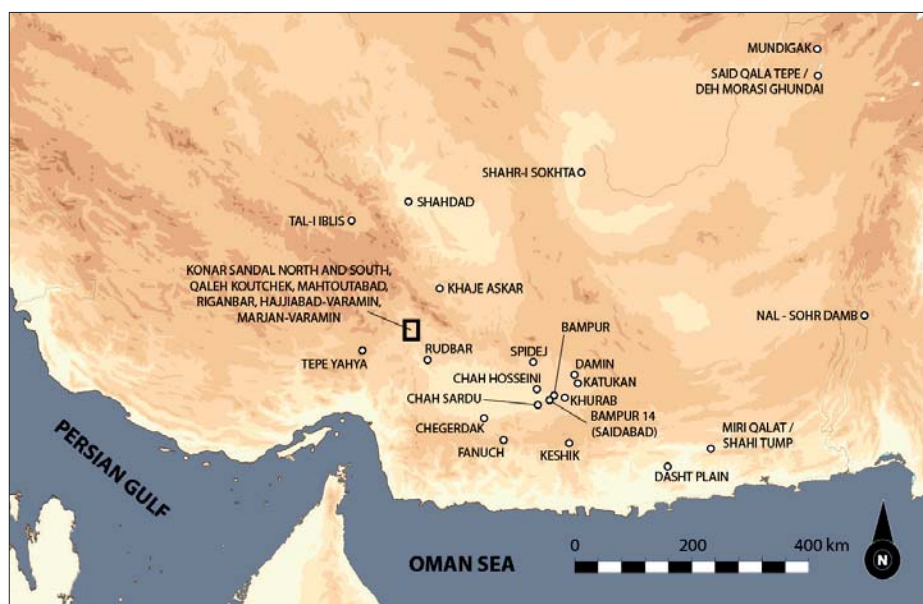


Fig. 1. General map of the Early Bronze age sites mentioned in the text (F. Desset).

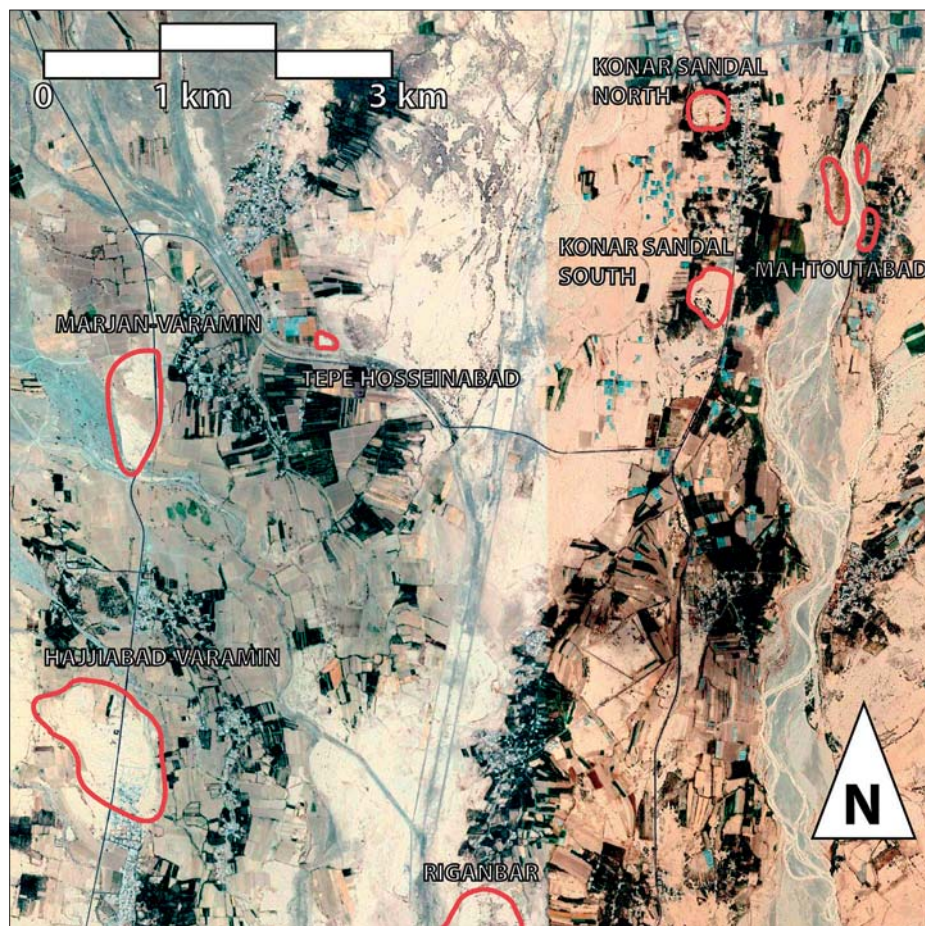


Fig. 2. Aerial picture of the archaeological area south of Jiroft, emphasizing the location of some of the main archaeological areas of the Konar Sandal sites complex (F. Desset).

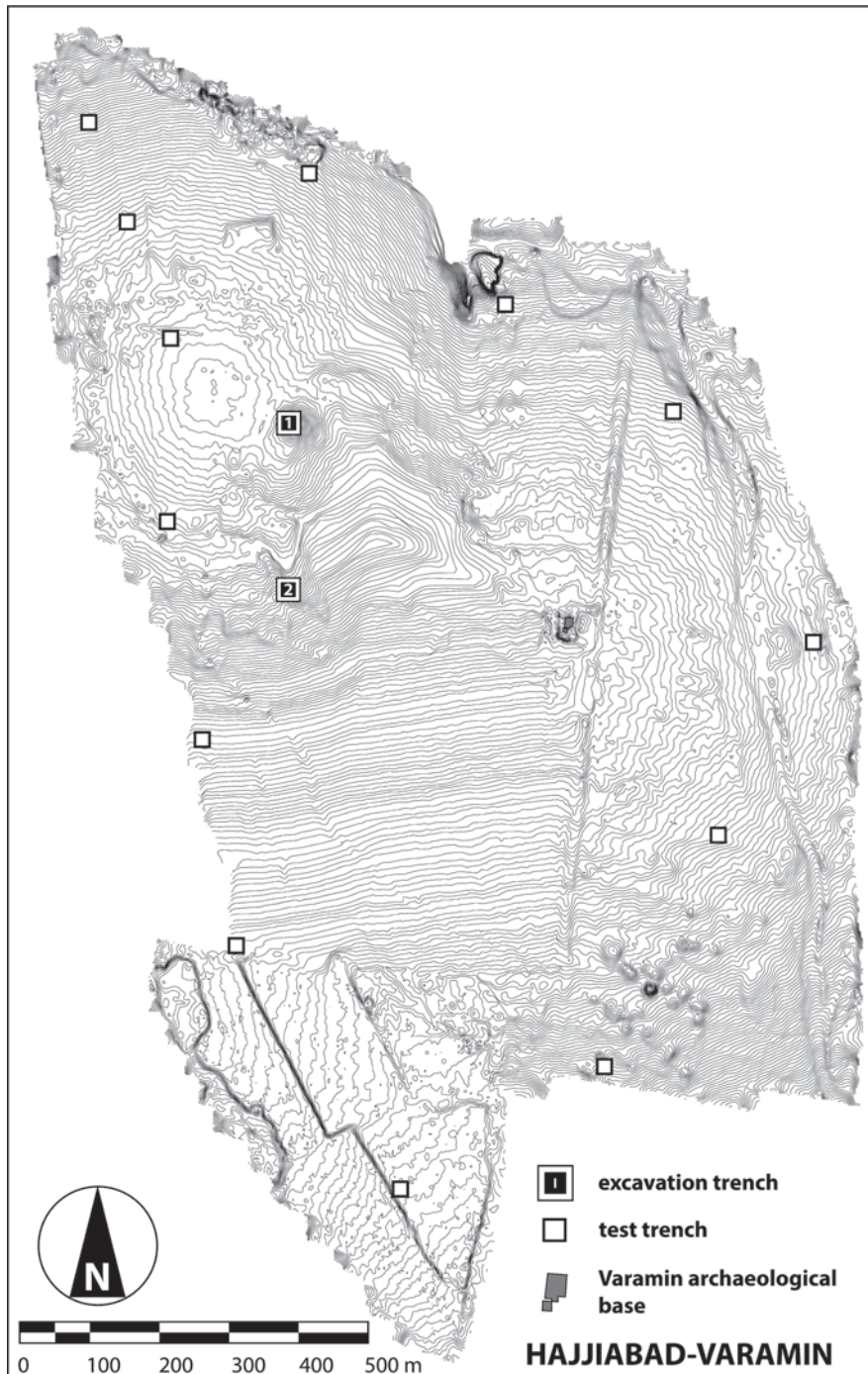


Fig. 3. Hajjiabad-Varamin archaeological area
 a) Topographic map of Hajjiabad-Varamin archaeological area
 and location of Trenches I and II, excavated by N. Eskandari (Ali Daneshi).
 The interval between two contour lines is 50 cm.

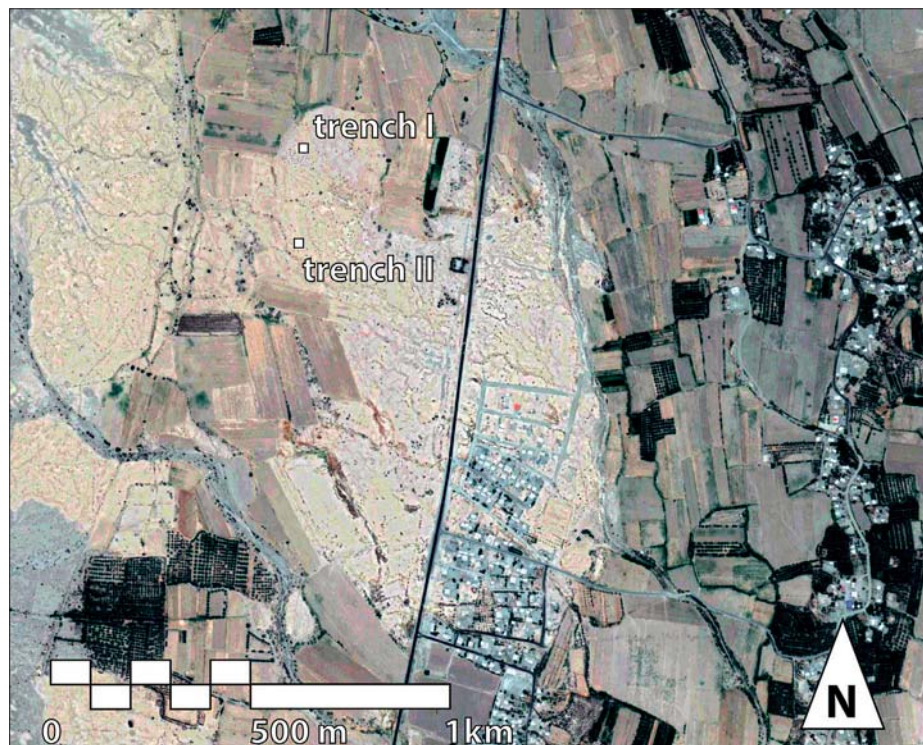


Fig. 3. Hajjiabad-Varamin archaeological area
b) Aerial picture of Hajjiabad-Varamin archaeological area and location
of Trenches I and II, excavated by N. Eskandari (F. Desset).

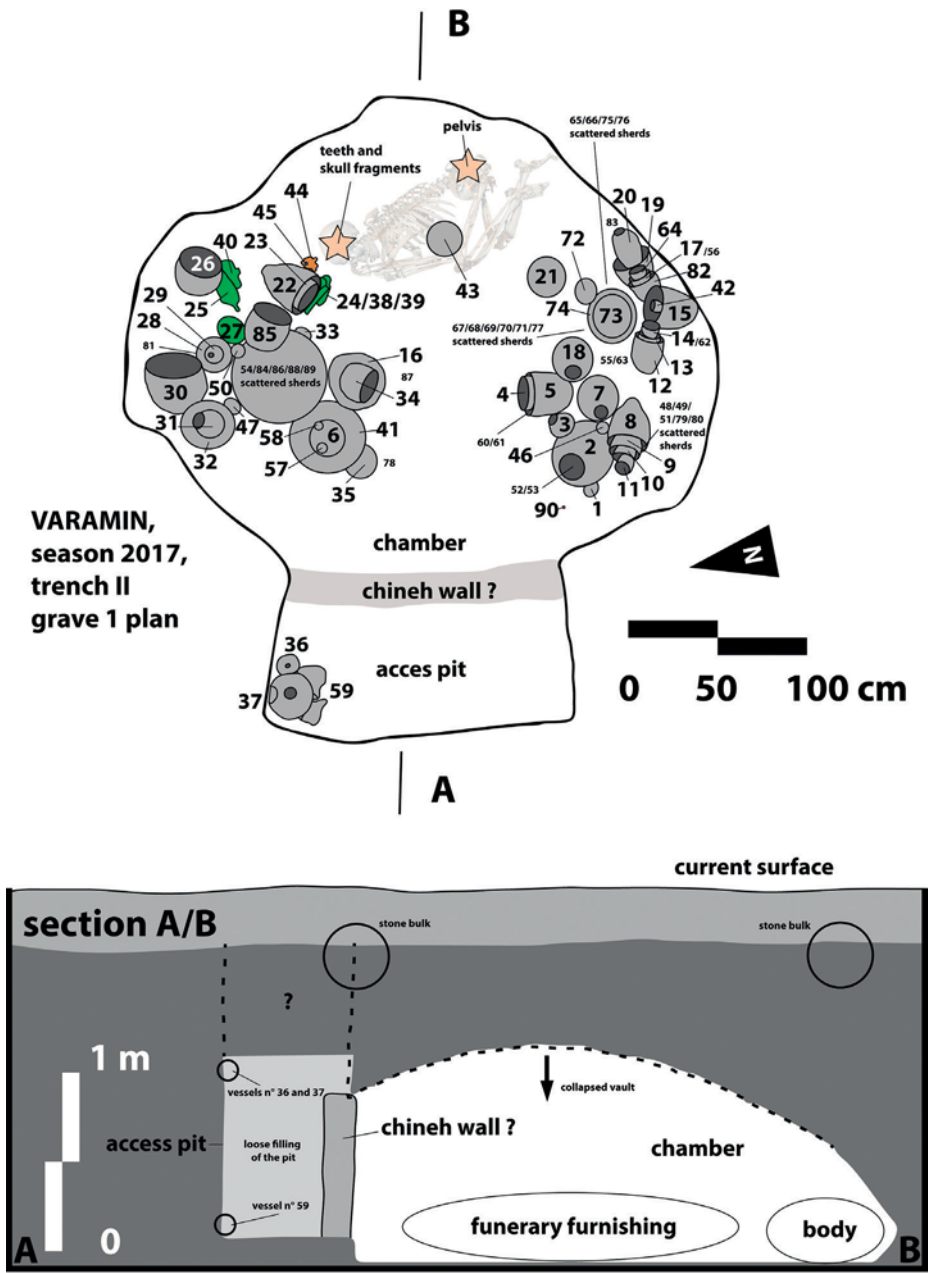


Fig. 4. Plan and section of Grave 1 (N. Eskandari and M. Shahsavari).

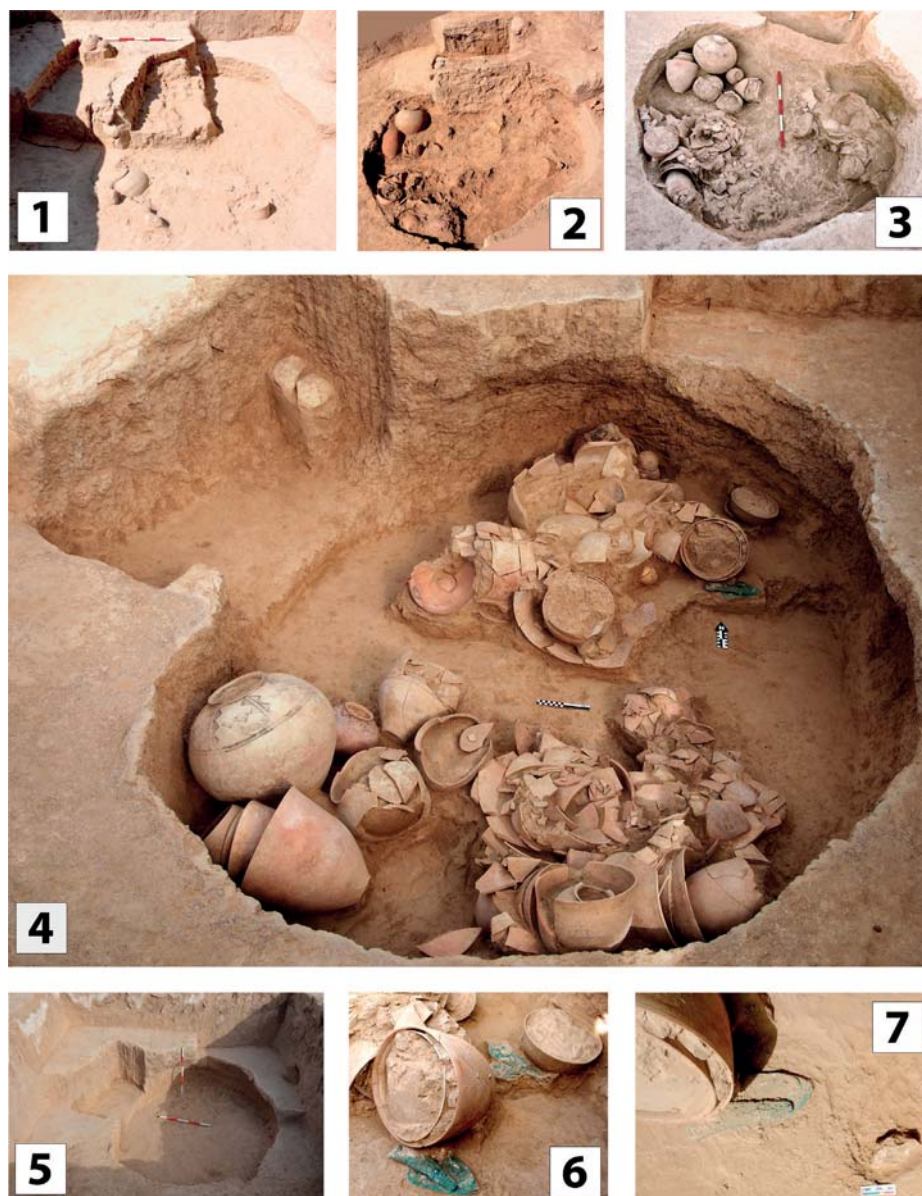


Fig. 5. Pictures (1 to 5) of Grave 1 at different stages of the excavation.
6: detail of the copper-based artefacts n° 24, 38, 39 and 25, 40;
7: detail of small cranial fragments near copper-based artefacts n° 24, 38 and 39
(N. Eskandari and M. Shamsavari).

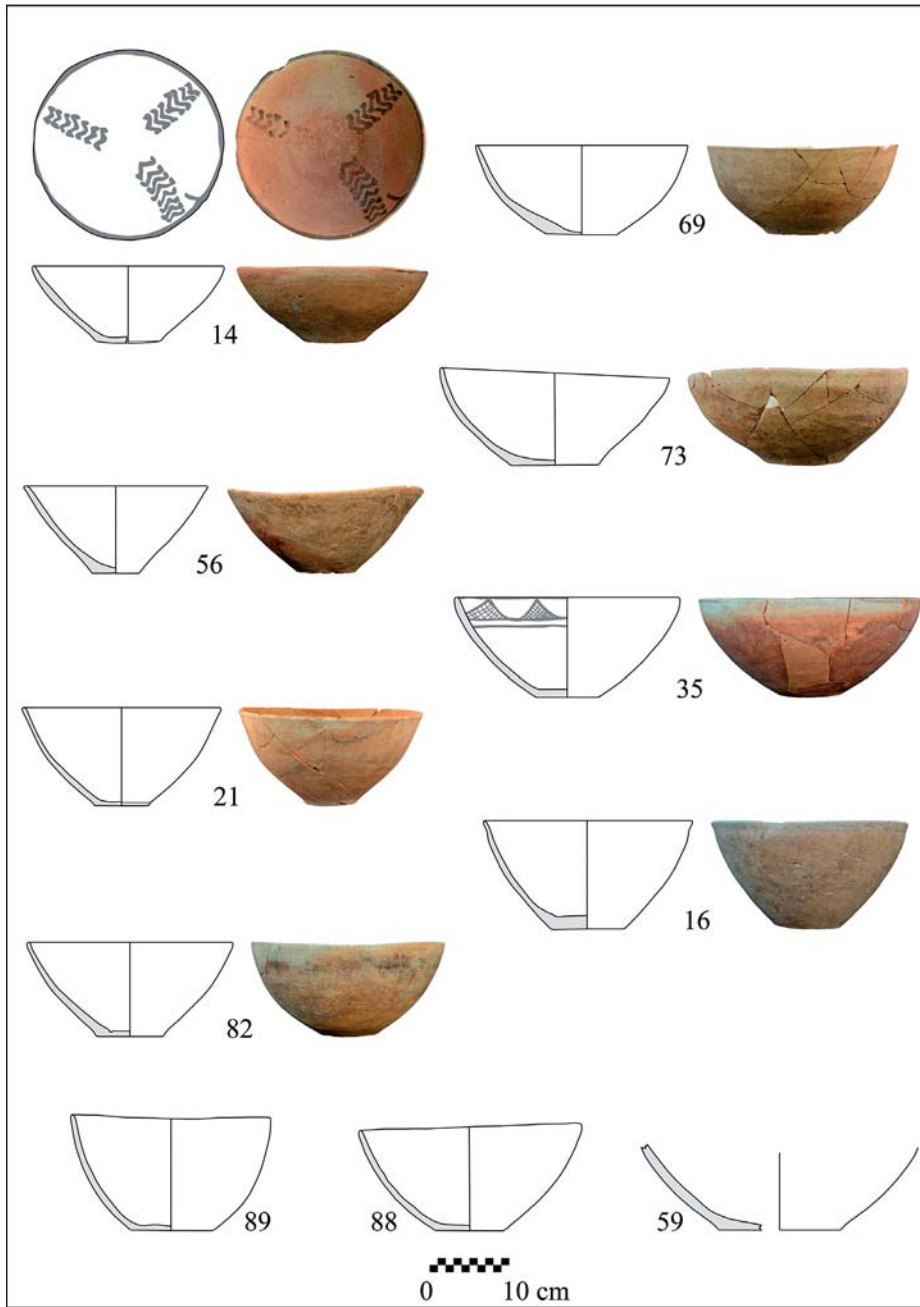


Fig. 6. The furnishings of Grave 1: simple truncated-conical to hemispherical bowls (M. Abdolahizadeh and F. Desset).

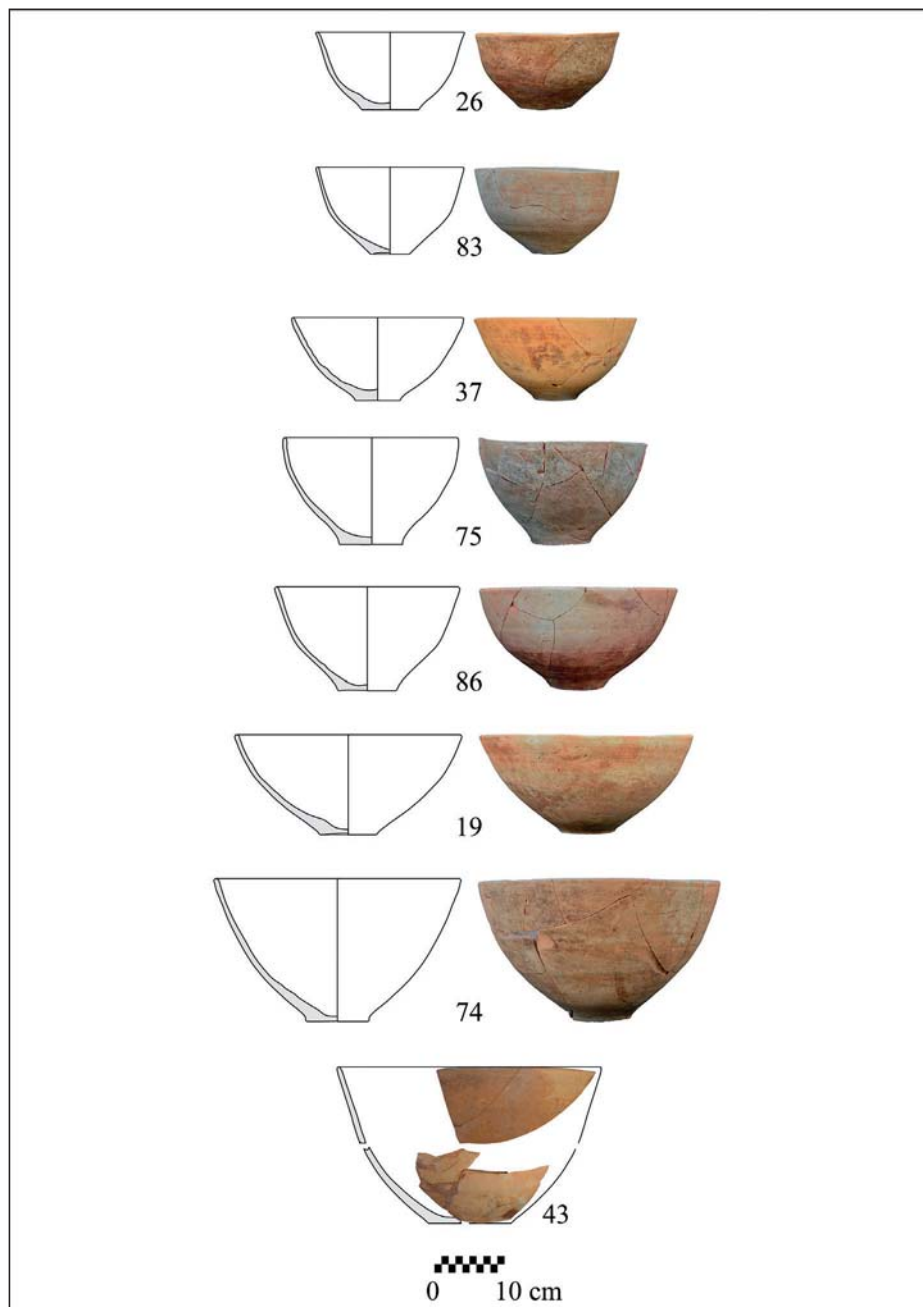


Fig. 7. Simple truncated-conical to hemispherical bowls with a deeper body (M. Abdolazadeh and F. Desset).

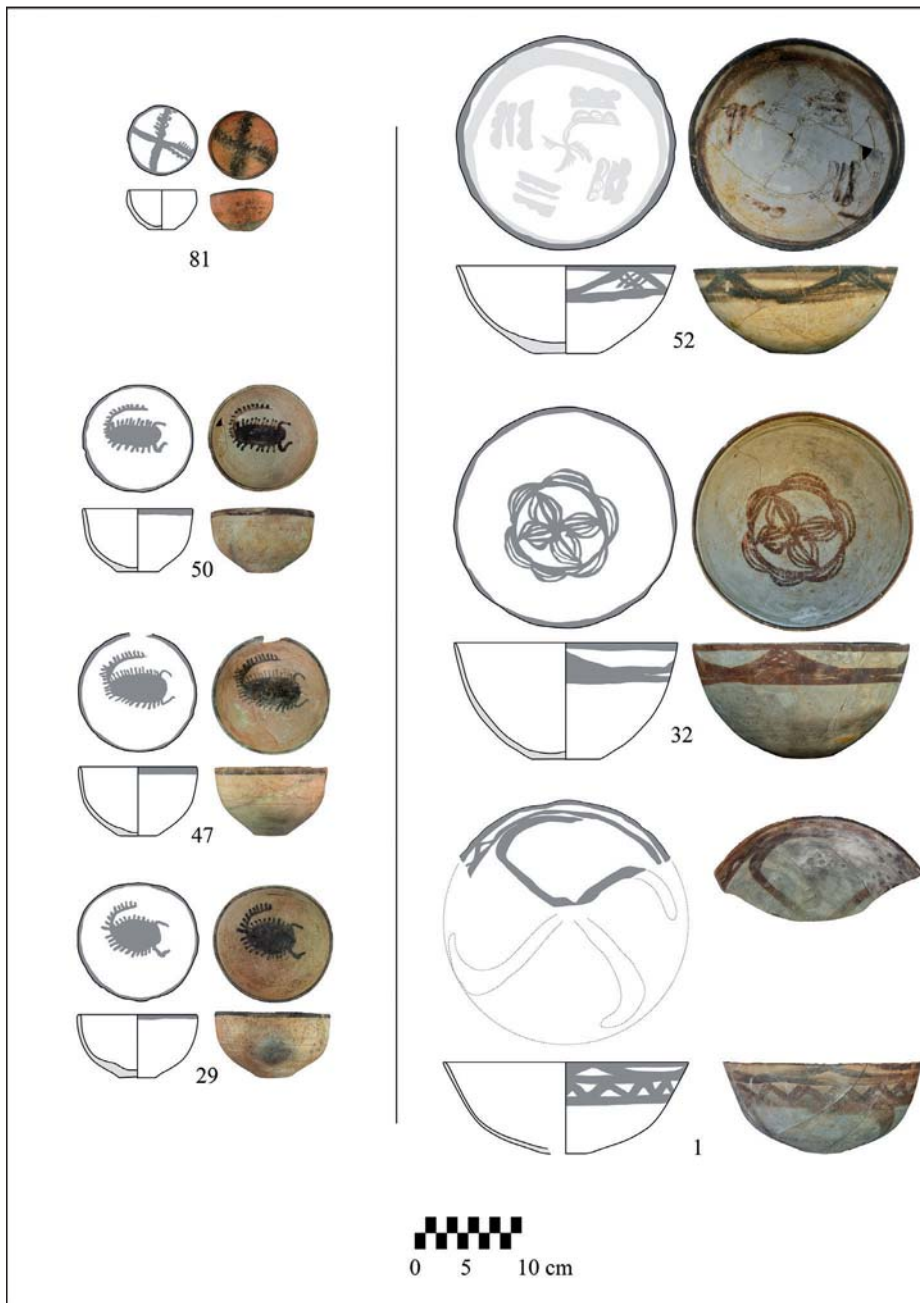


Fig. 8. Early Baluchi painted grey ware hemispherical bowls (on the right) and painted small bowls (on the left) (M. Abdolahizadeh and F. Desset).

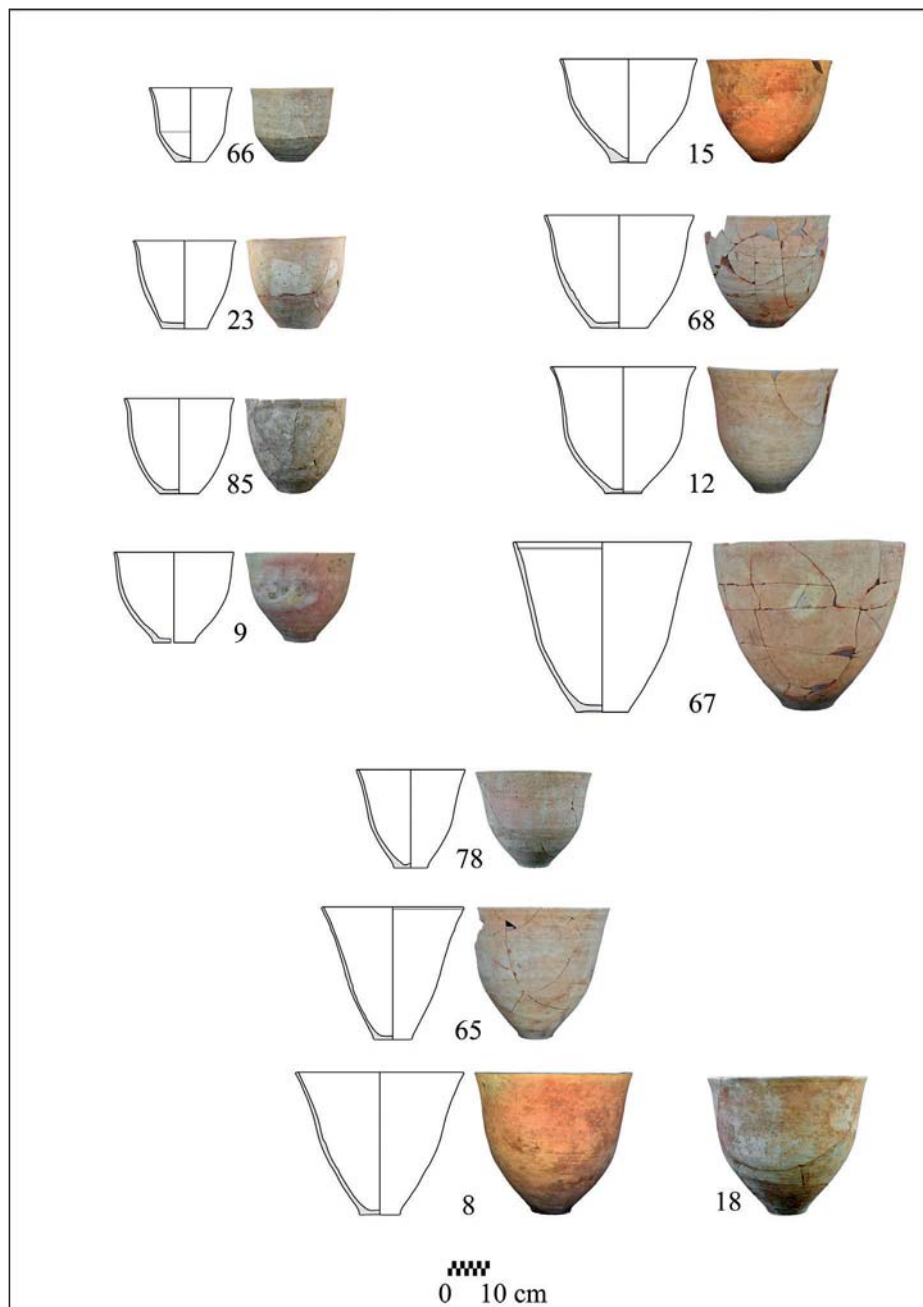


Fig. 9. Unpainted bell-shaped beakers and pots
(M. Abdolalizadeh and F. Desset).

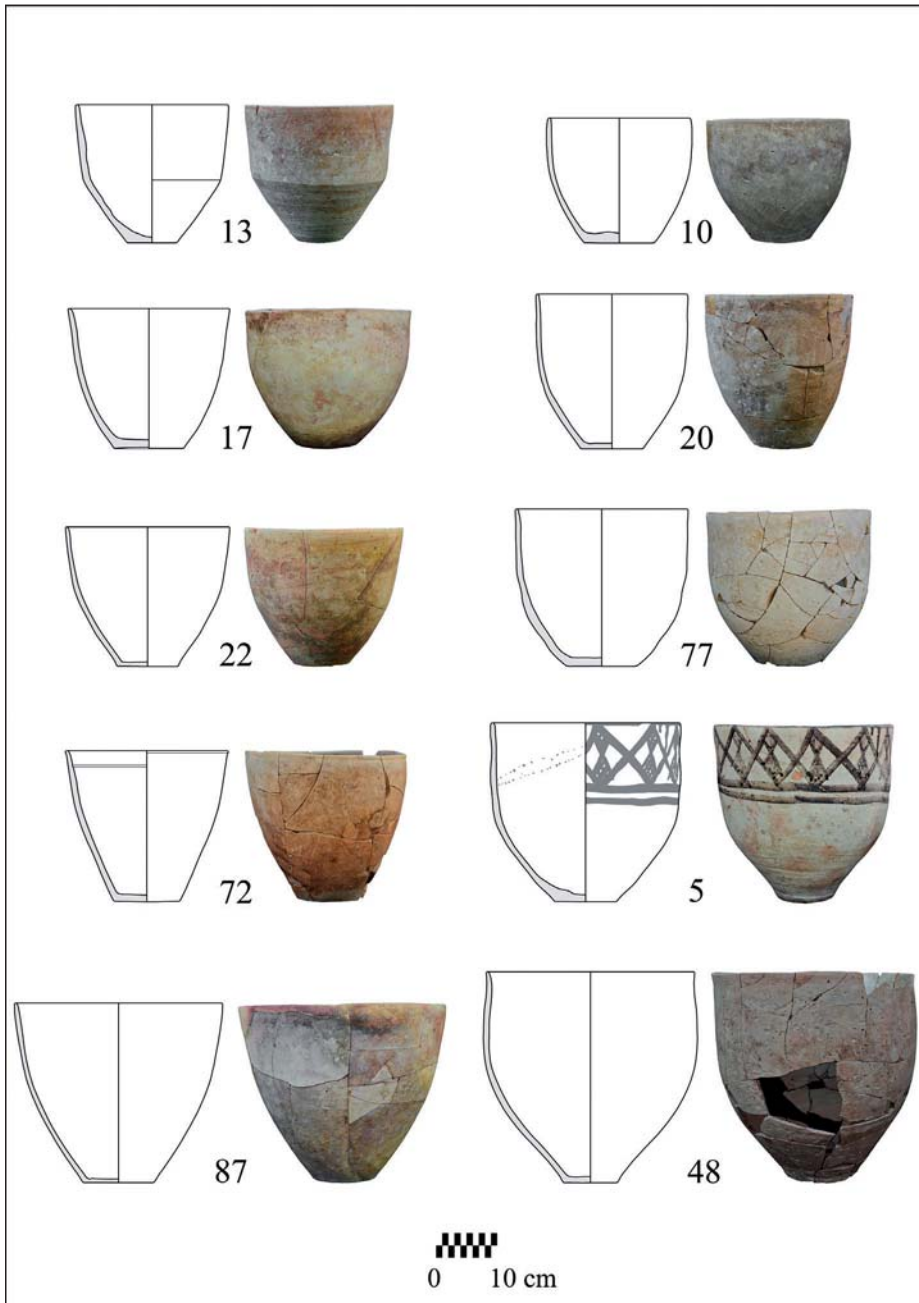


Fig. 10. Bell-shaped beakers and pots
(M. Abdolahizadeh and F. Desset).

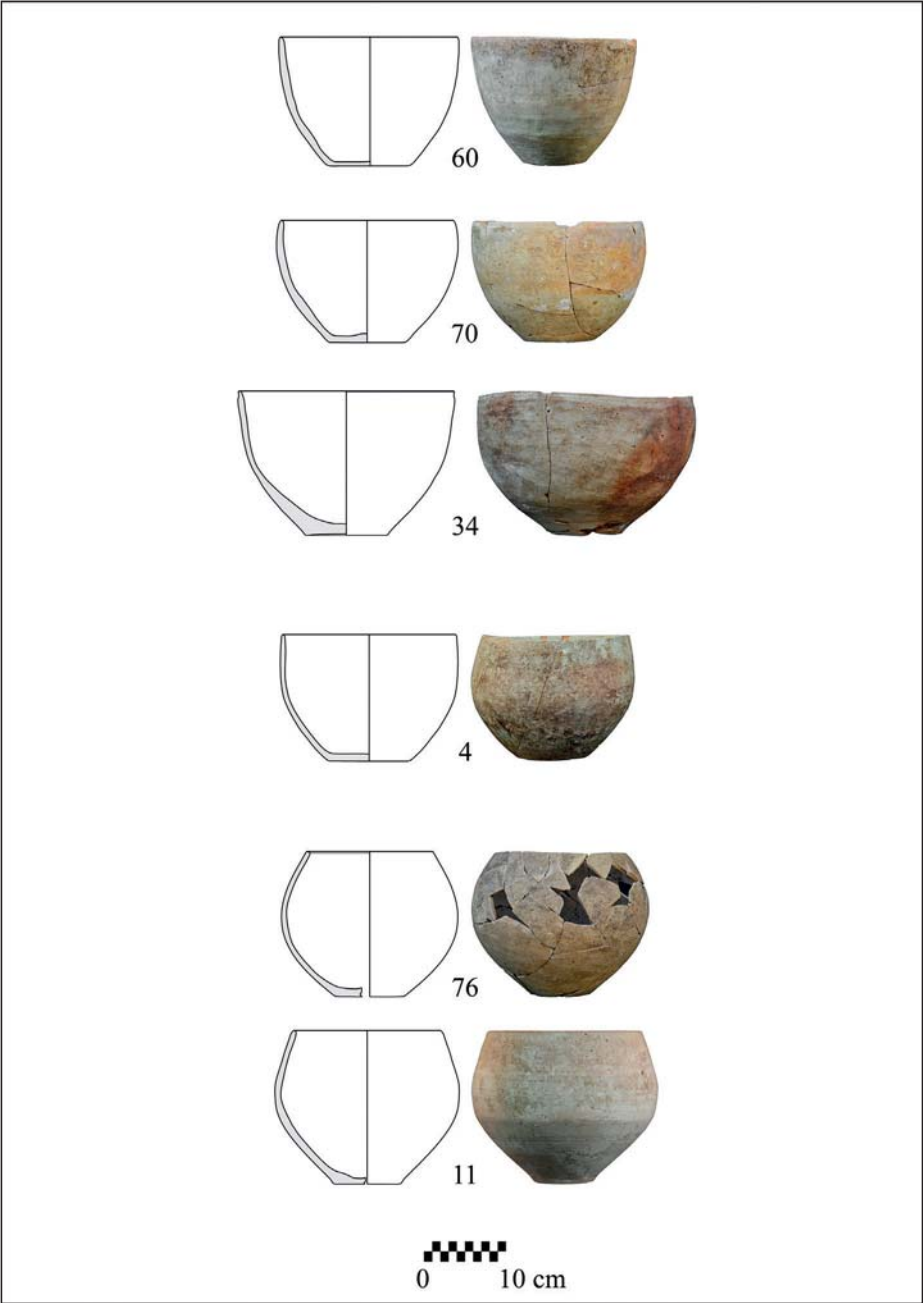


Fig. 11. Unpainted deep bowls, hemispherical to sub-globular (M. Abdolahizadeh and F. Desset).

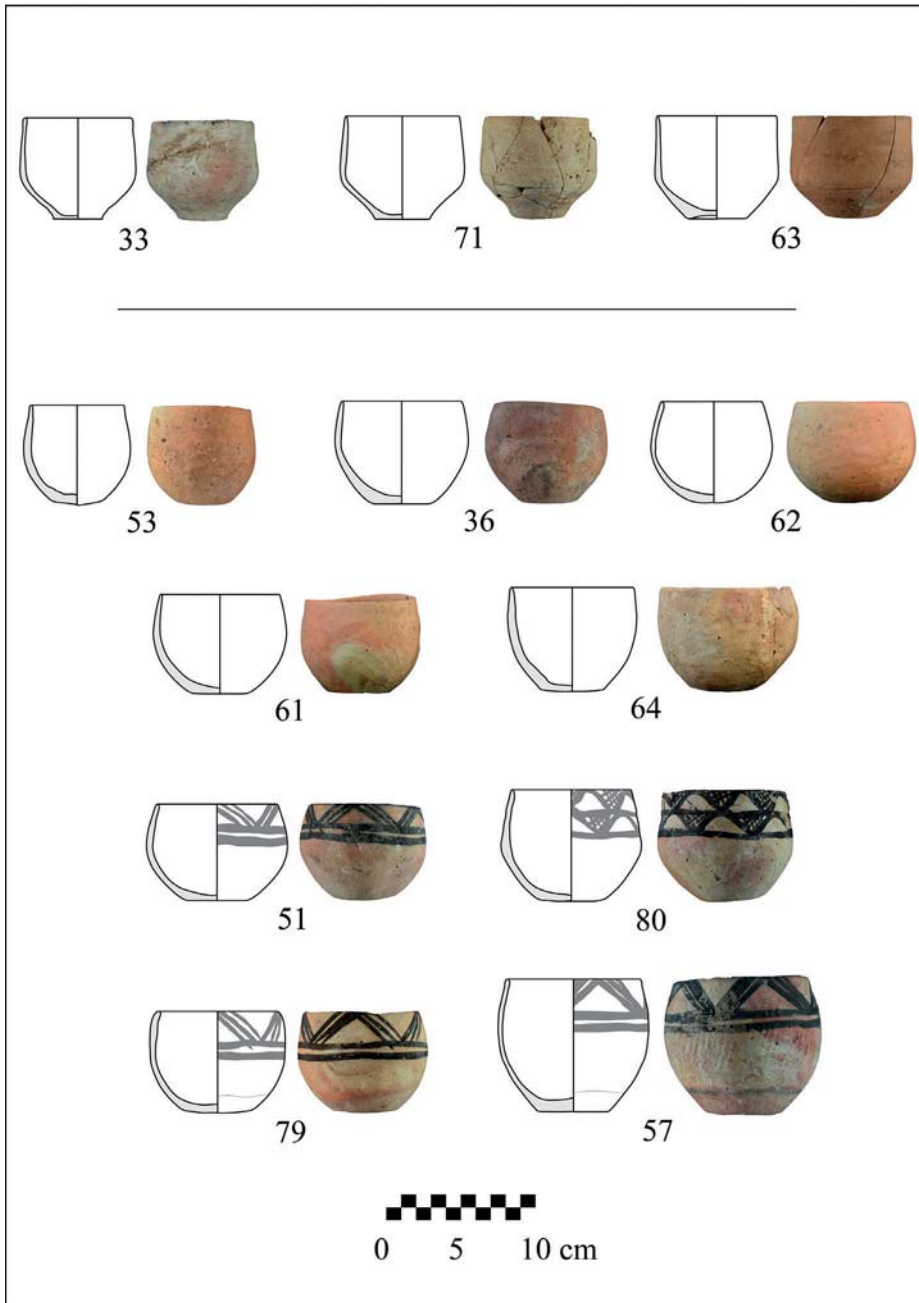


Fig. 12. Unpainted sub-cylindrical small bowls (top row)
and sub-globular small bowls
(M. Abdolahizadeh and F. Desset).

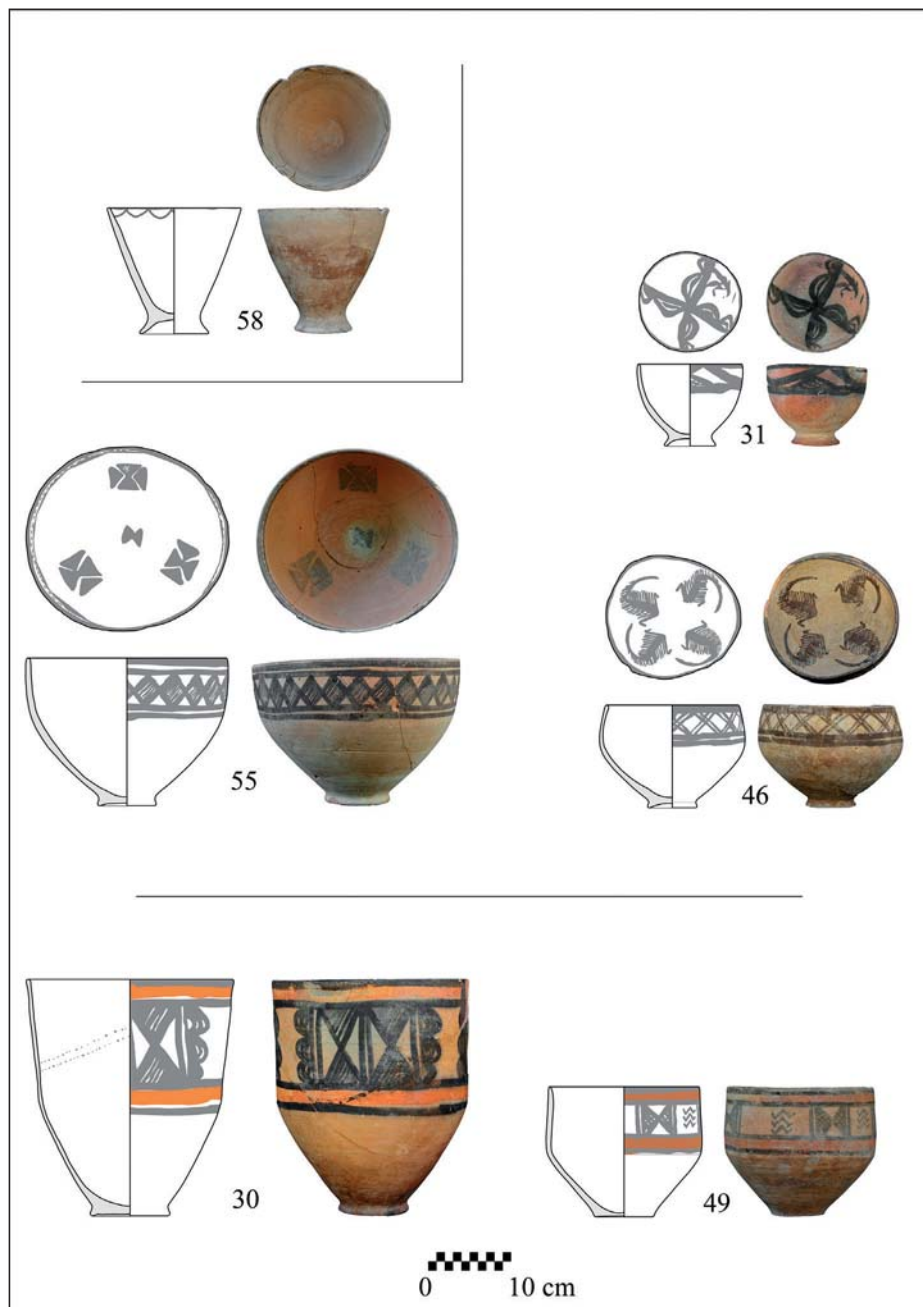


Fig. 13. Painted footed bowls and bell-like vases (n° 49 has a plain base)
(M. Abdolalizadeh and F. Desset).

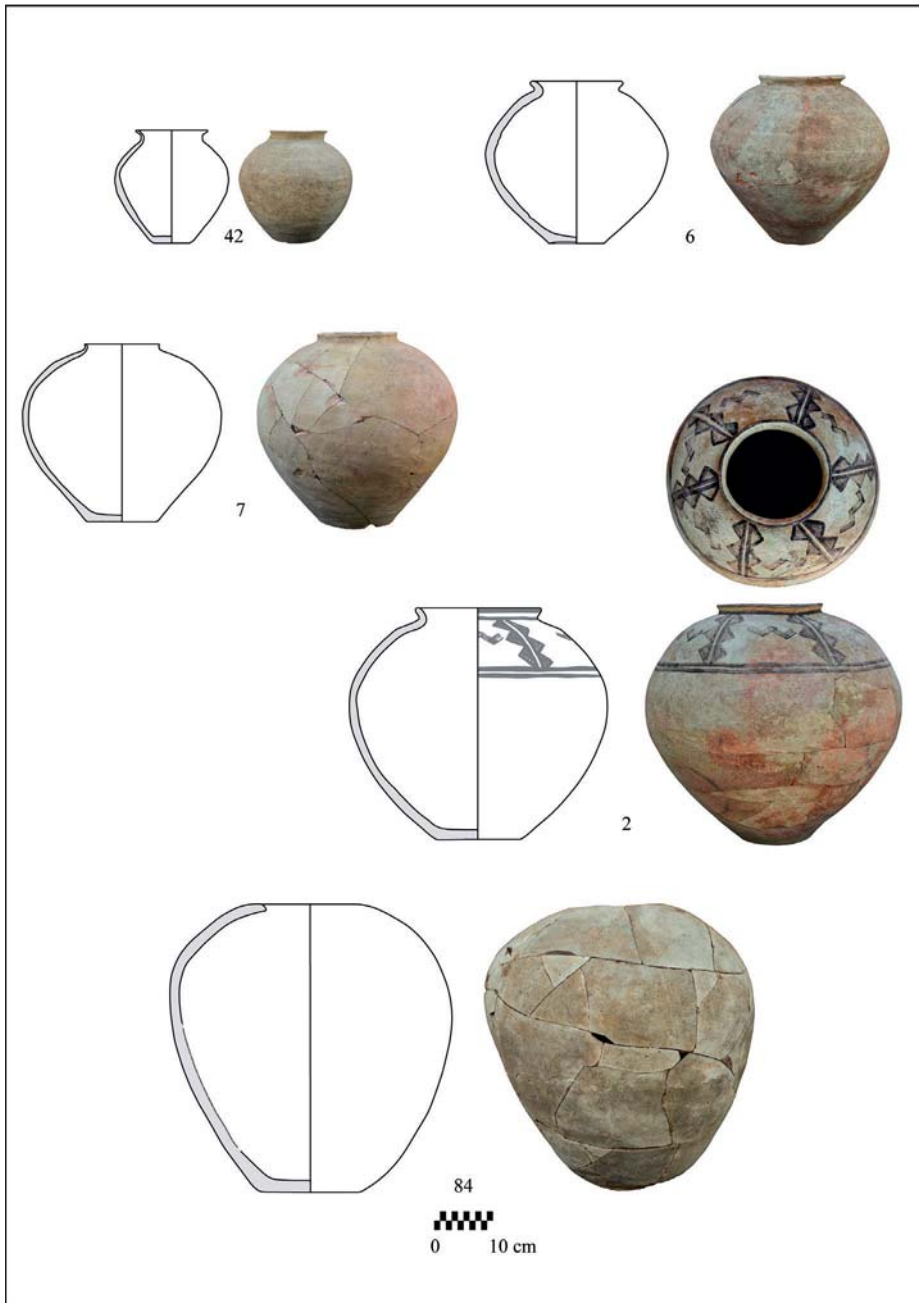


Fig. 14. Restricted globular jars, with everted rim (n° 42, 6, 7, 2) and a large hole-mouth jar (n° 84) (M. Abdolahizadeh and F. Desset).



Fig. 15. Nal-like cylindrical canister vase (n° 54)
and painted globular jars (n° 3 and 28)
(M. Abdolahizadeh and F. Desset).

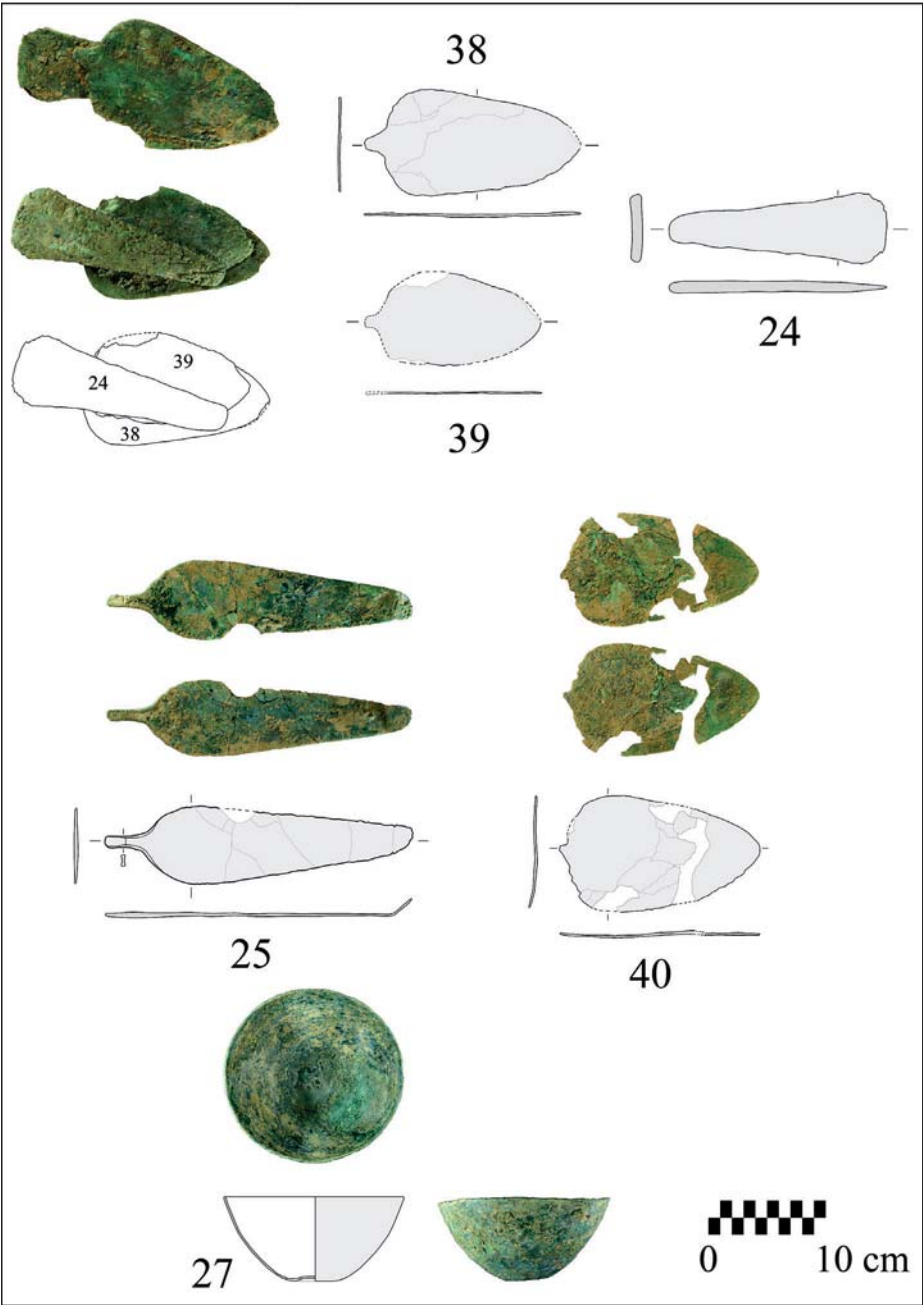


Fig. 16. Copper-based artefacts
(M. Abdolahizadeh and F. Desset).



Fig. 17. Stone beads and a cockle shell
(M. Abdolalizadeh and F. Desset).

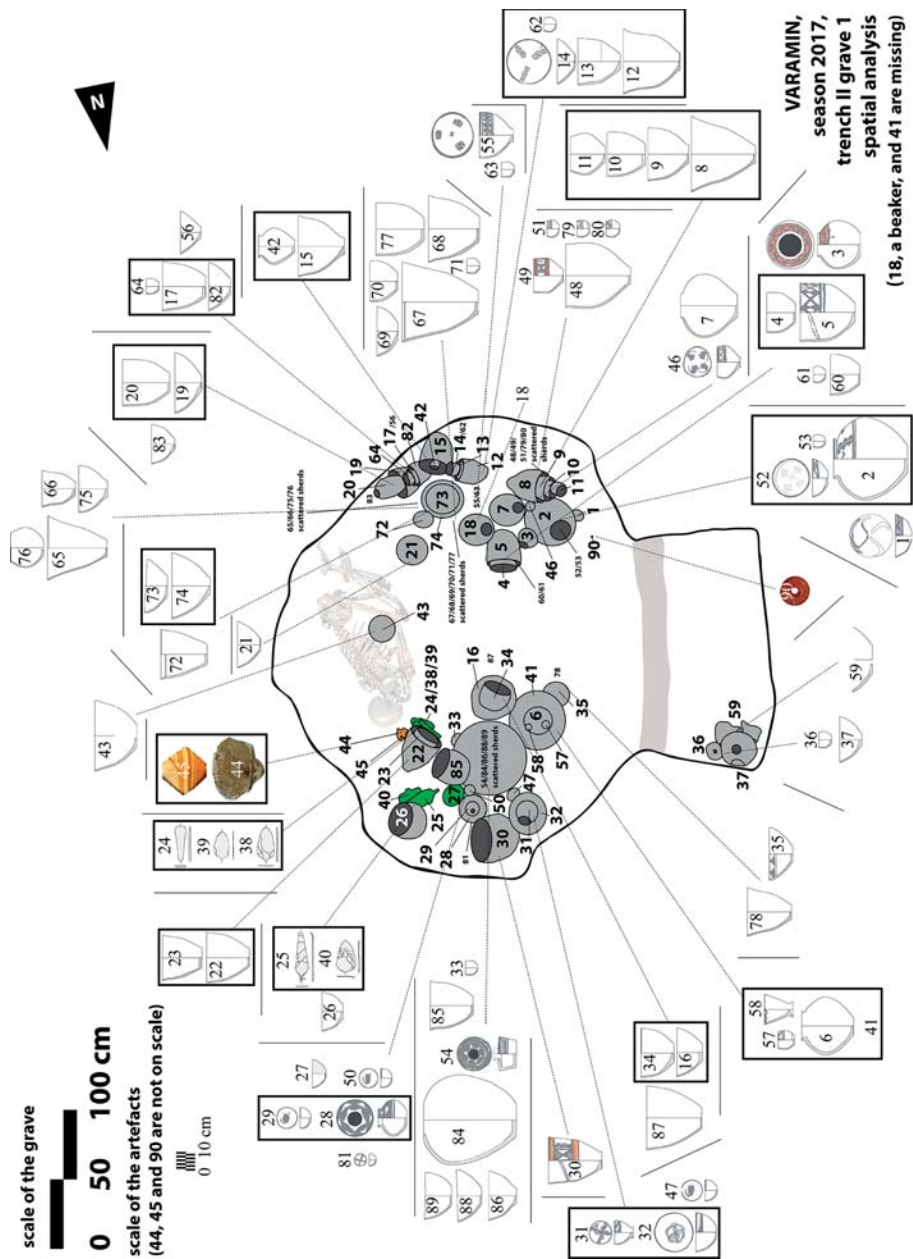


Fig. 18. Spatial distribution of the furnishings in Grave 1 (F. Desset).

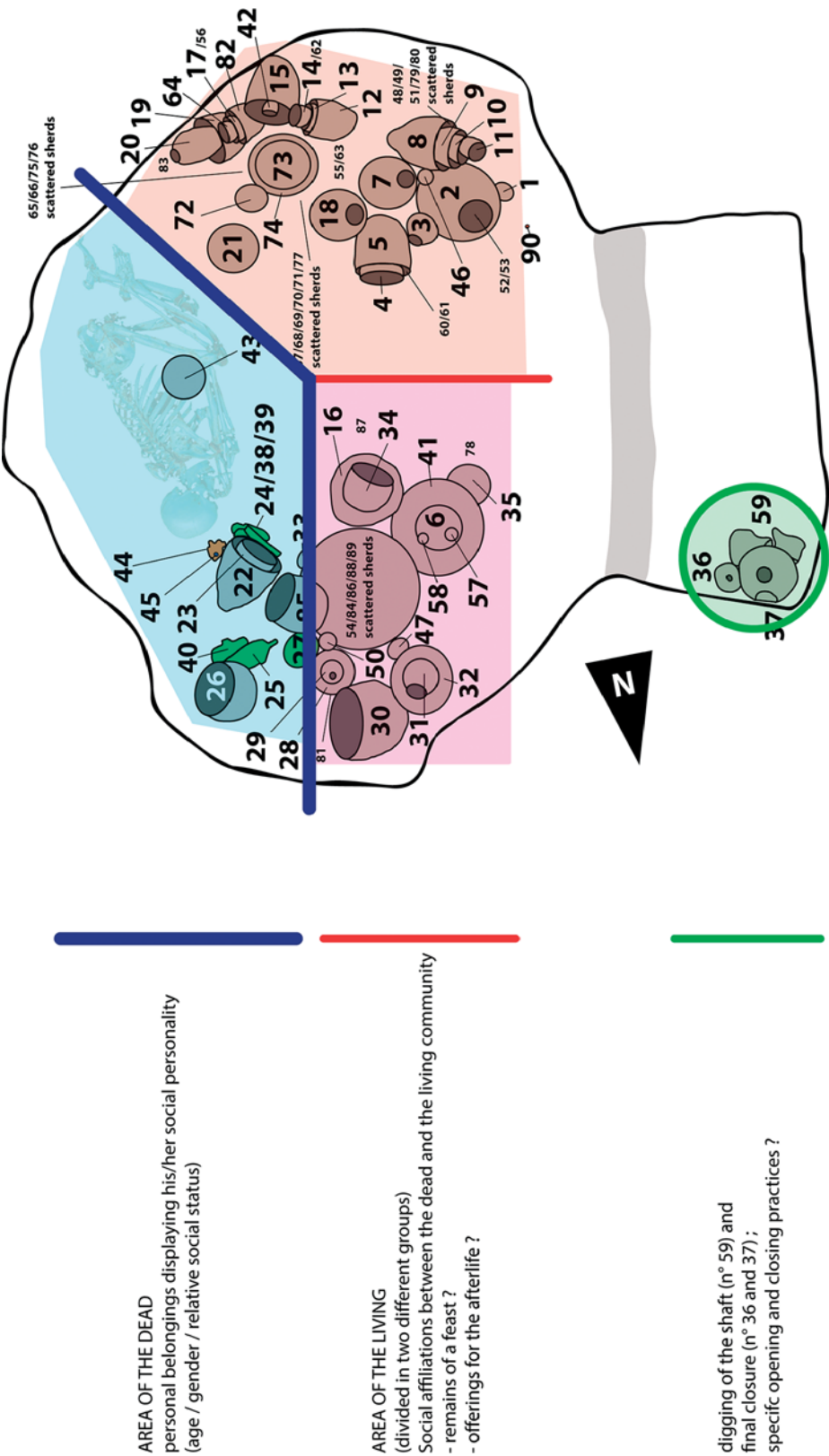


Fig. 19. Spatial analysis of the setting of Grave 1 (F. Desset).




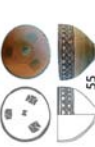











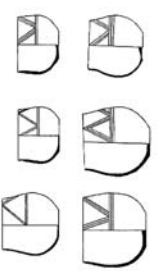
Varamin, grave 1	50 (47/29) 	28 	30 	55 	51 (57/59) 
Mahtoutabad (III)					Desset, Vidale and Soleimani 2013, fig. 22 
Tepe Yahya		Potts 2001, fig. 2.12a (phase IVC1) 		Beale 1986, fig. 4.22 (phase VB)  Potts 2001, fig. 4.17d Persian Gulf room (phase IVB5) 	Potts 2001, fig. 1.44c and Mutin 2013, fig. 3.52.1 (phase IVC2) 
Jiroft		Madjidzadeh 2003, p. 160 			
Rudbar area					Stein 1937, pl. 20 Kal.1 
Spidej, grave 125					
Saidabad / Bampur 14	Rahbar 2003, pl. 12 and 21 		Heydari, Desset and Vidale, forthcoming, n° 30 		Rahbar 2003, pl. 17 
Shahr-i Sokhta					Bonora et al. 2000, fig. 4 (Period I) 

Fig. 20. General comparative framework for the pottery of Grave 1. The samples are not to scale (F. Desset).






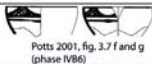











Varamin, grave 1				
Mahtoutabad (III)				
Tepe Yahya				
Spidej, grave 125				
Saidebad / Bampur 14				
Damin				
Shahr-i Sokhta				
Miri Qalat				
Kech-Makran Dasht plain, site n° 26				

Fig. 21. General comparative framework for the pottery of Grave 1 (continued).
The samples are not to scale (F. Desset).













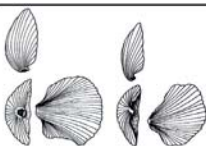




Varamin, grave 1	 40 (38/39)	 24	 25	 44
Tepe Yahya			  Potts 2001, fig. 1.26 (phase IVC2)	
Khaje Askar			 Soleimani et al. 2016, fig. 13	 Soleimani et al. 2016, fig. 14
Chegerdak		 Heydari, personal communication	 Heydari, personal communication	
Saidabad / Bampur 14	 Rahbar 2003, pl. 55		 Rahbar 2003, pl. 56	 Rahbar 2003, pl. 56
Spidej, grave 125		 Heydari, Desset and Vidale, forthcoming n° 52	 Heydari, Desset and Vidale, forthcoming n° 53	
Damin		 Tosi 1970, fig. 17.b/c	 Tosi 1970, fig. 18.c	

Fig. 22. General comparative framework for the non-ceramic artefacts of Grave 1.
The samples are not to scale (F. Desset).

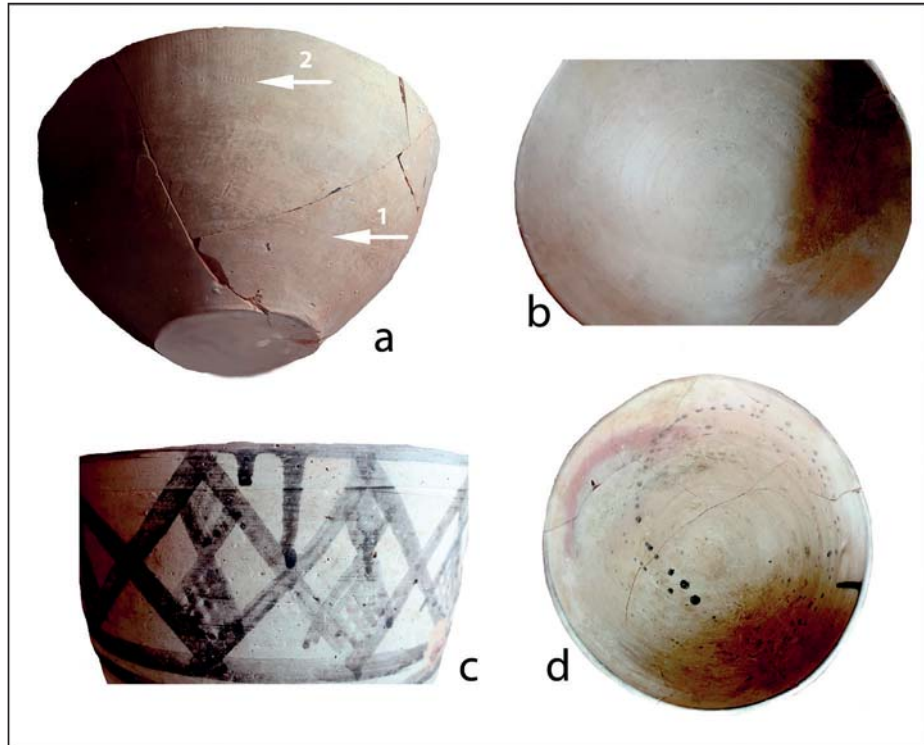


Fig. 23. Technological observations:

- a) The outer surface of the unpainted bowl illustrated in Fig. 7, n° 74. 1: upper limit of the turned area on the lower part of the bowl; 2: lower limit of the area proximal to the edge, distinguished by repeated vertical paddling marks (M. Vidale).
- b) The inner surface of the bowl in Fig. 7, n° 19. Note the continuous spiral left by the potter during the final stage of the wheel-throwing process (M. Vidale).
- c) The pattern painted on the exterior of the bell-like pot in Fig. 10, n° 5. The large drops indicate the position of the pot during painting (M. Vidale).
- d) The interior of the bell-shaped pot of Fig. 10, n° 5, with sprinkled droplets of black paint. Note the spiral pattern of the droplets, indicating that the pot was revolving immediately after painting (M. Vidale).

DOG BURIALS IN ANCIENT IRAN

BY

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Abstract: Archaeological evidence indicates that dogs were the first animals domesticated by humans, and the practice of burying them is considered a universal phenomenon, as abundant samples have been discovered from different sites of the Old and New Worlds. Dog burials occur both individually and accompanied by human skeletons, a sign of mutual social adaptation between dogs and humans. In Iran, dog burials have been reported at the sites of Shahr-i Sokhteh, Gohar Tappeh, Qaleh Kash of Qaemshahr, Tape Rivi, Khoramabad cemetery of Meshgin Shahr, and Narges Tape (Golestan Province). The present article outlines these burials and considers their social and ritual contexts, concluding that some seem to be ritualistic and others can be explained by the social affinity between humans and dogs.

Key Words: Dog Burial, Ritual Beliefs, Shamanism, Ancient Iran

Introduction

Studies of mortuary practice mostly contemplate the rituals and religious beliefs of human societies, and apply their data to recognize and evaluate hierarchical structures and where the deceased persons fit into them (Saxe 1970; Binford 1971; Tainter 1978; O'Shea 1983; Gillespie 2000). Along with human burials, there have been numerous reports of animal burials such as dogs (Morey 2006; 2010), horses (for instance see Khalatbari 2003 and Rezalou 2012), and cats (especially in Egypt, see: Clutton-Brock 1981; Ikram 2013), both individually and in association with humans around the world.

Dogs were the first and one of the most important animals domesticated by human beings, and their burials have frequently been documented in human settlements from the Upper Palaeolithic period to the present day (see Crockford 2000; Morey 2006, 2014). There are many debates

regarding the time, location, ancestry, and processes of dog domestication. Some scholars (Shannon *et al.* 2015; Pang *et al.* 2009) date back the domestication of dogs 15,000 years, while others (Germonpre *et al.* 2009; Druzhkova *et al.* 2013; Skoglund *et al.* 2015) argue for a date as long as 30,000 years ago. Many areas of the ancient Near East (von Holdt *et al.* 2010), Far East (Savolainen *et al.* 2002; Pang *et al.* 2009) and several other areas (Axelsson *et al.* 2013) have been proposed for the origin of dog domestication. Given the archaeological evidence, it seems that the co-evolution of humans and dogs took place in the Upper Paleolithic period. Some researchers believe that the human-dog relationship had many benefits for early modern humans and might have played an important role in competing with and overcoming the Neanderthals, who did not keep dogs (Tacon & Pardoe 2002; Shipman 2015).

Historical and ethnographical evidence demonstrates that dogs are loyal to humans and that this loyalty helped, for example, secure nomadic ways of life, since dogs protect livestock. Dogs are important as labour forces on farms, as social companions, and even as a food source on rare occasions (Miklosi 2014). In modern urban life they are also used to detect drugs and odours, plan routes, and assist people with disabilities (Mohammadi Molasaraei & Mosavi 2002; Scanes 2018: 28-30). In addition, there is evidence for the ritual significance of dogs in ancient Near Eastern societies of Levant and Anatolia (Edrey 2008).

In this article, we first discuss different theories about dog burial and its possible origin, and then outline the documented dog burials in Iran in order to address the following questions: Where do they occur and in which periods were they common in society? Do they reflect the religious beliefs and rituals of Iranian societies as they have been shown to do in Mesopotamia and Asia Minor? Can dog burial in Iran be explained in relation to the importance of dogs in ancient Iranian belief systems?

A review of dog burials with special emphasis on Southwest Asia

Based on archaeological evidence, there were two major types of dog burial. The first, most prevalent type, is the burial of a dog individually (i.e. not accompanying a human), the second is the deposition of one or more dogs next to a human (Crockford 2000; Morey 2006, 2010: 151). Many cases of dog burials have been identified in different parts of the world, including Europe (Day 1984; Aaris-Sorensen 2001; Correia 2013),

North America (Morey & Wiant 1992; Cole & Koerper 2002), Meso-america (Azua 2000), and the Far and Near East. In a comprehensive study of dog burial worldwide, Morey showed that the earliest dog burials date back to the transition from Pleistocene to Holocene about 15,000 to 12,000 years ago (Morey 2010: 150-153; 2014), with the earliest evidence of dog burial discovered in a 14000-year-old mine at Bonn-Oberkassel in Germany in 1914 (Morey 2006: 168). By reviewing literature on dog burials around the world, he argued that dog domestication had occurred in the same period (Morey 1994, 1995, 2006, 2014).

In the Near East, dog burials are widely reported at sites from the Neolithic to the historical periods. They are mainly attested in ritual contexts, some within or near temples or ritual sites, and others associated with ritual vessels (for a review see Edrey 2008). Notable early discoveries include three dog burials at the Natufian sites of Ein-Mallaha and Hayonim Terrace in the northern Levant, which are recognized as evidence of dog domestication (Davis & Valla 1978; Tchernov & Valla 1997), and a dog burial at Çatal Höyük, which had been placed beneath a platform accompanied by an adult (Russell & Doring 2006: 75-76). Other sites in the Levant and in Anatolia to yield dog burials are Gilat (Levy *et al.* 2006), Tell Haror (Oren 1993), Tell Miqne (Dothan 2002: 17) and Tell Yavne (Wapnish & Hesse 1993: 68-69).

For the Achaemenid and Hellenistic periods, dog burials have been reported in the Levant at sites such as Khalde, Tell Dor, Tell el-Hesi, Tell Hajar Eyid, Tel Ashdod, Shoham, Tell Qasile (Edrey 2008: 275-276), and at Ashkelon where they were most numerous. Between 1989 and 1992, a total of 1,400 dog burials were unearthed, dating from the second half of the fifth century to the beginning of the fourth century BCE (i.e. the Achaemenid period; see Stager 1991: 27-30). The dogs had been interred on their sides in shallow pits with their tails tucked between the hind legs. There were no burial offerings with the bodies. About 60% to 70% were puppies and an analysis of the skeletal remains detected no butcher marks, indicating that they had died from natural causes (Wapnish & Hesse 1993).

The reasons for these dog burials in Ashkelon and the allocation of a specific location for the deposition of dogs during the 80-year reign of the Persians have been subjects of considerable debate among scholars. Stager, the excavator of the site, citing the Persians' high regard for dogs and their prohibition against burial of the body to prevent soil contamination, attributed the burials to the Phoenicians and proposed that they were

temple dogs respectfully buried in connection with ritual activities after their natural death (Stager 1991: 39). Conversely, Wapnish & Hess (1993: 76) argued that the dogs were from the local dog population and there is no certainty that the Phoenicians were responsible for their burials. Smith (1991: 12-14) hypothesized that the death of these dogs was linked to a disease epidemic, and that they were buried for health reasons, with burial preferred over burning, which would be a costly method with potential to spread the disease. More recently, Edrey (2008: 276-277) asserted that the long tradition of dog burial in Levant during the Achaemenid period was a Canaanite tradition adopted by various cultures of the Southern Levant, while Smith (2015) emphasized the importance of dogs as a traded commercial good bred by the Tyrians.

Besides the Levant and Anatolia, dog burials have been reported in Syria, Mesopotamia, the Emirates and Central Asia. For example, pits with 20 puppies and one adult dog were found with bones of pigs, donkeys, sheep and goats, mostly slaughtered, in Tell Mozan in the province of Hasaka in northeast Syria. These finds date to 2300-2100 BC (Collins 2004; Buccellati 2005: 10-11). In Mesopotamia, more than 30 dog burials were uncovered on a ramp leading to the main precinct of the temple – also known as the “Dog Temple” – dedicated to Gula / Ninisina, the goddess of good health at Isin (Clarck 2001: 54-55). In fact, Gula was the healing goddess of the Mesopotamian Pantheon, the ‘great physician’, ‘who revives the dead’, ‘gives life’ and ‘cares for life’ (Böck 2013: 15-16). And her sacred animal was the dog. In addition to above mention dog burials from her temple, a large number of small votive figures of dogs dedicated to the goddess by her devotees and supplicants were found in the Kassite temple at Isin and in temples at other Babylonian sites, such as Aqar-Quf, Nippur and Sippar (Ornan 2004: 8). The attribution of the dog to a healing goddess is explained by the fact that saliva of canines, like that of other mammals, has medicinal properties which work like antibiotics. Since the dog was a domesticated animal especially close to man, this trait was probably recognized very early on, and the animal was thus included in the worship of various healing deities (Ornan 2004: 18). Complete or partial dog skeletons have been found with human skeletons in some of the pit graves of the Gonur Tappeh cemetery (Sarianidi 2007: 85). Combined dog and human burial is also attested at Unar 2 in the United Arab Emirates by a second millennium BCE tomb containing the remains of a woman and her dog.

Dog burials in Iran

A number of dog burials have also been reported from various archaeological sites in Iran (Pl. 2).¹ In terms of chronology, all date between the mid-third millennium BCE and the first millennium BCE and with the exception of Shahr-i Sokhteh, all have been reported from the northern parts of Iran.

A) *Qaleh Kash (Taleqani) Tappeh of Ghaemshahr*

Qaleh Kash (Taleqani) Tappeh is located in Taleqani street of Ghaemshahr city in Mazandaran province. This site was first identified in 1977 and later excavated by H. Rezvani and M. Araqi in 2002. The first season of excavation unearthed a dog placed on the left side and oriented in a north-south direction. There were no offerings in the burial, but some ash and grey pottery sherds were found around it (Rezvani & Araqi 2002: 20-21). According to preliminary studies, the Qaleh Kash dog was a domestic animal, possibly male, and aged about fourteen years. The excavator presumed it had belonged to a shepherd who respectfully buried it. It should be noted that among the burials found in Qaleh Kash, only grave number two was at the same depth and north-south orientation as the dog burial (Pl. 3). The other burials were positioned in an east-west orientation (Rezvani & Araqi 2002: 21).

B) *Gohar Tappeh*

Gohar Tappeh is located in the western part of Rostm Kela, a suburban area of Behshahr city in Mazandaran province, and is one of the largest prehistoric hills on the south-eastern edge of the Caspian Sea with an area of 30 hectares. The region has been inhabited since the chalcolithic period and reached its widest extent during the Bronze Age (Mahfrouzi & Piller 2009). Two dog burials were discovered at Gohar Tappeh. In the 2003 excavations, the remains of a dog skeleton were discovered alongside a child burial (Pl. 4), however, the excavator believed that the animal had not been buried (Mahfrouzi 2003: 28). During the 2006 excavations, the skeleton of a 30-50-year-old man was found, placed on his left side on

¹ It should be noted that images of dogs on prehistoric pottery have been reported in southwestern Iran (see Hole & Wyllie 2007).

a northwest-southeast orientation. He was buried with objects including a dagger, an arrowhead, bronze and gold ornaments, and two large red crocks. Inside one of the crocks, located below his feet, was a dog in a squatting position with a lens-shaped vessel laid beneath its abdomen (Mahfroozi 2006: 183-184). This dog crock burial is a unique find, and given its adjacency to the deceased man's grave, we can assume that he was the dog's owner (Pl. 5-6).

C) Tappeh Eshgh

Road construction work around Bojnord city exposed the remains of a grave, badly damaged by the bulldozer, containing a human skeleton with the skeletal remains of a dog buried in a flexed position near the foot (Pl. 7). The burial offerings include a jar with a long, oval body and a small, flat base; a jar with sub-globular body; a jar with a concave curve at the base; and a conical bowl. Based on the burial offerings and comparisons with Gonur Tappeh, A.A. Vahdati has dated this burial to the "Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex" (BMAC) (c. 2200-1700 BC) (Vahdati 2014).

D) Shahr-i Sokhteh

Shahr-i Sokhteh, one of the most important settlements in southeast Iran, was occupied from the late fourth to the early second millennium BCE (Tosi 1983; Sajjadi 2009). Its cemetery covers 25 acres and has been excavated for 16 seasons (Sajjadi 2003, 2019; Sajjadi *et al.* 2008). Here a unique mass grave (1003) was uncovered with 13 human skulls placed beside the grave wall. One of the skulls belonged to a 12-year-old female and showed signs to suggest that brain surgery was conducted on it (personal communication with Sajjadi) (Pl. 8). The grave contained remains of a 45-year-old man and two dog skulls and a complete dog skeleton at the centre (Sajjadi 2005: 435) (Pl. 8).

E) Tappeh Rivi

Tappeh Rivi is located northeast of the small plain of the intermontane Somalghan, ten km south of the Atrak River plain. During the fourth excavation season a dog skeleton was found in one of the trenches (Jafari & Thomalsky 2019). The excavators did not consider this as an intentional burial (personal communication with M.J. Jafari).

F) Narges Tappeh

Narges Tappeh is located in Golestan Province and 35 kilometers east of the Caspian Sea. Excavations showed that it was occupied intermittently during the late Chalcolithic, the early to late Bronze Age, the Iron Age III and the Islamic era (Abbasi 2011; 43). A grave found in the Iron Age layers contained the skeletal remains of an 18-22-year-old woman (Burial 603), a 3-4-year-old child (Burial 604) and two immature dogs. The female was placed on a west-east orientation and the child was laid between her legs. The two dogs were laid near her, one to her north side on a north-east orientation, and the other on her southwest side in a north-south orientation (Abbasi 2011: 172-173) (Pl. 9).

G) Khoramabad cemetery of Meshgin Shahr

The ancient Khoramabad cemetery is located 7 kilometres west of Meshgin Shahr and was excavated during a single season in 2012 (Rezalou 2012: 213-214). The excavators of this cemetery introduced the graves as Scythian kurgans (Rezalou & Ayramlo 2015; 2017; Rezalou *et al.* 2018). Grave 22 containing a 25-35-year-old man was located between kurgans 26 and 24, which contained burial offerings. Kurgan 24 contained remains of 34 buried horses and kurgan 26, situated about 2 meters west of grave 22, contained 8 horses, 2 cows and 2 dogs. The central skeleton of kurgan 26 was one of the two cows. In the southern part of the grave, the two dogs had been lain over each other on top of a horse (Rezalou & Ayramlo 2015). A number of broken bronze plaques found in the grave appeared to have been hung on the animal's neck (Rezalou & Ayramlo 2017). The excavators believed that the original grave 22 belonged to a Scythian nobleman and the two lateral kurgan and animal burials were related to it (Rezalou & Ayramlo 2019) (Pl. 10). Since there were no other obvious signs of their method of slaughter, the animals appear to have been strangled.

Discussion

Extensive studies across the world provide many possible reasons for the phenomenon of dog burial from prehistory to contemporary times in some Western countries. Based on their mythology, some scholars believe that in certain cultures dogs were assigned to guide spirits to the world of the dead. After having been a person's companion in daily life, the dog

would remain with them, serving as their guide upon their death (Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1994: 237). Since dogs were a vital part of everyday life in prehistoric times, other scholars believe they naturally made their way into the spiritual world and were therefore placed with human bodies in the burials (Morey 2008: 271). Another theory suggests that animal burials in general, and dog burials with humans in particular, are a sign of shamanism (Eliade 1962: 546). In this regard, a female burial surrounded by different particles of animal bones at Hillazon Cave in the Levant has been introduced as an instance of Shamanism tradition during the Epipaleolithic period (Grosman *et al.* 2008).

Citing more recent examples, some scholars have discarded the ritual aspect of dog burials, believing that the evidence implied that the animal deserved to be buried as a member of the human group or family (Mornement 2018: 281). According to Wilson's *biophilia* hypothesis, the human desire to pay attention to and feel connected with animals is a biological tendency. For Mornement, the notion of "biophilia" referred to an innate and genetically determined affinity of humans with the natural world as it manifests itself in their tendency to interact and form emotional attachments with other living organisms. Accordingly, animals seem to attract attention of human beings more than objects and it is assumed that paying attention to animals conferred a fitness and survival benefit from an evolutionary perspective (Mornement 2018: 283). In fact, the tendency towards animals involves a set of evolutionary, psychological, and cultural aspects (Serpell 2004). Thus, dog burials are a reflection of the considerable social adaptation between human and dog. The relationship between people and dogs is a purely social one, and therefore, the continuity of dog existence over time can be at least partly a product of social selection (Morey 2006). In this view, according to K. Douglas (2000: 24): "The natural habitat of the dog is the human family, and when family members die, we usually bury them". In this sense, the dog is actually buried as the "human best friend" (Griffin 1967: 178).

In ancient Iran, dogs, like horses, camels and buffalos, are highly valued. As Ahura Mazda's animal, the dog had a profound presence in ancient Iranian religion. An entire chapter of the *Zend Avesta* is devoted to dogs – *span* in Avesta, *svan* in Sanskrit (Pour Davoud 1976: 202-207; Mohammadi Molasaraei & Mosavi 2002: 175-188) – addressing their positive role, their proper training, and the punishment of those who mistreat them. It was asked of Ahura Mazda in Fargard 3 of the *Vendidad*: "Maker of Material

world, thou Holy One! Which is the second place where the Earth feels happiest? Ahura Mazda answered: it is the place where one of the faithful erects a house with a priest within, with cattle, with wife, with children, and good herds within; and wherein afterwards cattle continue to thrive, virtue to thrive, fodder to thrive, the dog to thrive, the wife to thrive, the child to thrive, the fire to thrive, and every blessing of life to thrive” (Vendidad 17). Fargard 15 indicates that maltreatment of dogs was perceived as a cardinal sin (Vendidad, 131). Dogs were believed to be responsible for the removal of evil spirits, and an ancient tradition called *Sagdi*² referred to “being looked at by a dog” (Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1994: 235).

In addition to Zoroastrianism, dogs are an important iconographic motif of ancient Mithraism and are one of the few animals fed by the blood of bulls killed by Mithra (Pl. 1). This sacred scene is often related to the myth of world creation and the dog symbolizes the forces of good (Hinnells 1997: 80). Scholars believe that the roots of Mithraism are to be found in the beliefs of the inhabitants of ancient Media (see Bivar 2005) who occupied the northern half of modern Iran. The Medes too apparently believed in dog-sanctification. According to Herodotus (*Hist.* I, 140), the Magi (one of the six Median tribes) killed all animals with their own hands except dogs and humans. He also stated that Astyages, king of the Medes, had a shepherd named Mithradates, who along with his Median wife named *Spako*, meaning ‘female dog’ in Median, secretly raised Cyrus out of sight of the king (Herodotus, *Hist.* I, 110). Interestingly, the same word for dog is used today in certain Iranian languages and dialects, which are common mainly in Median areas, for example, Taleshi, Sangsari, Semnani, Shahmirzadi, and Kashani. In addition, modern followers of the Yarsan (Ahl al-Haqq) religion in Guran and Qalkhani of western Kermanshah Province cook a special bread for their dogs referred to as *Sapek* (“dog bread”) (Hezhar 1997: 431).

In Iran it is clear that dog burials occurred in different contexts. In a simple subdivision, the burials can be divided into four groups:

- 1) Dogs buried with humans, such as Tappeh Eshgh and Narges Tappeh, and the crock burial of a dog from Gohar Tappeh.

² Zoroastrians believe that when a person is dying or dead, a dog is brought to his bed to see the body, because in Zoroastrianism, when the soul leaves the body, Nasuš (the demon who touches human corpses and makes them filthy) attacks him, and when the dog sees the corpse, Nasuš comes out of it (Razi 2005: 77).

- 2) Dogs presented as offerings or sacrifices as at Shahr-i Sokhteh and the Khoramabad cemetery of Meshgin Shahr.
- 3) Simple dog burial without specific rituals, such as at Taleqani Tappeh of Ghaemshahr.
- 4) Dog carcasses that may have been accidentally buried as at Tappeh Rivi and Gohar Tappeh (specimen A).

Given the diversity of the archaeological contexts and varied nature of the interments, the dog burials at these sites cannot all be explained on the basis of a single theory. Consequently, each category of burial must be analysed separately (though the fourth needs no discussion here).

The first category, defined as dogs buried with humans, included the Middle and late Bronze Age burials at Tappeh Eshgh and Gohar Tappeh, and the Iron Age III burial at Narges Tappeh. In all three burials, especially the Gohar Tappeh crock burial, the dog was interred with special rituals. In both Bronze Age burials, it was accompanied by a ceramic vessel. Gender does not appear to have been a defining factor: a dog was buried with a male at Gohar Tappeh and with a female at Narges Tappeh. All three sites in question are on the north-eastern route of Aryan migration to Iran (Kozmina 2007: 70-79). The burial of Tappeh Eshgh is attributed to the culture of the “BMAC” and Sarianidi considered the presence of dogs in the burials of this period as a sign of Iranian paganism and the earliest evidence of Proto-Zoroastrian (Sarianidi 2007: 160-180). This view was rightly criticized by Lamberg-Karlovsky, who warned that archaeological materials cannot be attributed to ethnic groups or specific rituals without written documentation (Lamberg-Karlovsky 2002, 2003). Furthermore, dog burials, either alone or with humans, have not yet been reported from the Persian heartland, i.e. Fars province. In addition, as we have seen in the case of the Ashkelon cemetery in Israel, the burial of dogs was a long-standing Canaanite tradition in the southern Levant region adopted by various cultures for a long period of time (Edrey 2008: 276-277).

Direct evidence for the second category, dogs presented as offerings or sacrifices, is provided by the complex burial of Shahr-i Sokhteh in which a middle-aged man's body was buried at the centre of a tomb surrounded by 13 human skulls. Such a complex burial in this third millennium BCE city reflects the importance of the deceased person, and as the site's excavator acknowledged, we cannot underestimate the possibility of human sacrifice in such burials (Sajjadi 2005: 434). Of course, given the presence of two dog skulls and one complete dog skeleton in the burial, we are most

likely witnessing dog sacrifice here as well. There are two ways to interpret this burial: the deceased man held high social status, or, more likely, he was a priest, or shaman, or another kind of high-ranked individual in a religious institution at Shahr-i Sokhteh. Evidence for dog, horse, and cow sacrifice has also been obtained from the Khoramabad cemetery of Meshgin Shahr, with a Scythian burial likely to have been of a high-ranked person, even a Scythian prince (Rezalou 2012). The goddess *Tabiti* (Vesta) bore a great importance among the Scythians, and horses, cattle, and dogs were sacred animals related to her (Rice 1957: 76). Thus, it can be assumed that the presence of dogs amongst funerary offerings of the Scythians is attributable entirely to their religious beliefs.

The third category of dog burial attested in Iran consists of simply depositing the dog in a simple grave without funeral rites. This type of burial reflects the mutual social relationship between dogs and humans, and most likely the role of dogs as human companions, but does not necessarily reflect the religious beliefs of people of the time.

Concluding remarks

Dogs are considered one of the first animals to have been domesticated by humans. For a variety of reasons, including their inherent loyalty to humans, dogs have held an important place in various cultures, even in religious and ritual beliefs. The effective and vital role of dogs in urban, rural, pastoral, and nomadic life has led in some cases to their burial with respect, much like humans, after their death, even if their burial was not a consistent tradition in ancient settlements and cannot be taken as a universal practice. Furthermore, we have seen that dogs were not the only animals to have been buried.³

The results of the present study show that dog burial in Iran was not a widespread phenomenon. With the exception of Shahr-i Sokhteh, all dog burials identified in Iran have been reported from sites in the northern parts of the country and all date between the mid-third millennium BCE and the first millennium BCE. Unlike the Levantine and Mesopotamian instances

³ In addition to the animals in the Khoramabad cemetery of Meshgin Shahr, note that animals such as young goats were buried in human graves using complex decorations and rites in the “Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex” burials of Tappeh Chalo (Vahdati & Biscione 2015).

where the dog burials were purely ritual, the burials of Shahr-i Sokhteh and Khoramabad cemetery of Meshgin Shahr were ritualistic. In fact, at these sites, the dog played a victim role that might be reminiscent of a ritual act. The presence of the dogs in burials from sites such as Taleghani Tappeh or Gohar Tappeh, however, may reflect the animal's strong presence in people's lives and the owners' attachment to their dogs. Although dogs were an important part of ancient Iranian beliefs, the results of this study suggest that this belief did not lead to systematic and purposeful burial of dogs, and no dog burial has been reported at all from the Achaemenid period in Iran.

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Plate 1. A relief depicting Mithra killing a bull, while animals such as dogs and snakes feed on its blood, the Louvre Museum (Soudavar 2014: fig. 4).

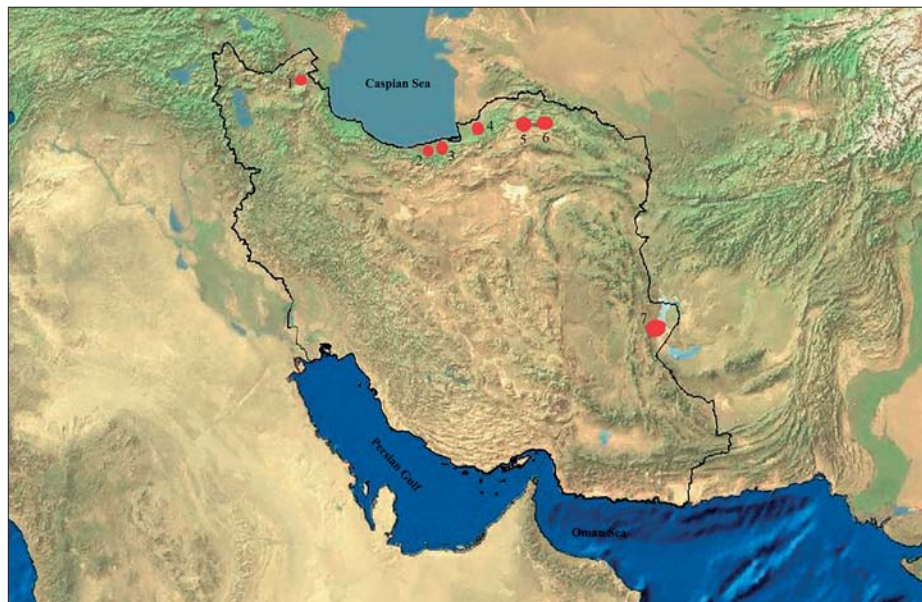


Plate 2. Map showing sites with dog burials:
1- Khoramabad Cemetery, 2- Taleghani Tappeh, 3- Gohar Tappeh,
4- Nargas Tappeh, 5- Rivi, 6- Tappeh Eshgh, 7- Shahr-i Sokhteh.



Plate 3. Dog burial of Tappeh Taleghani in Ghaemshahr.

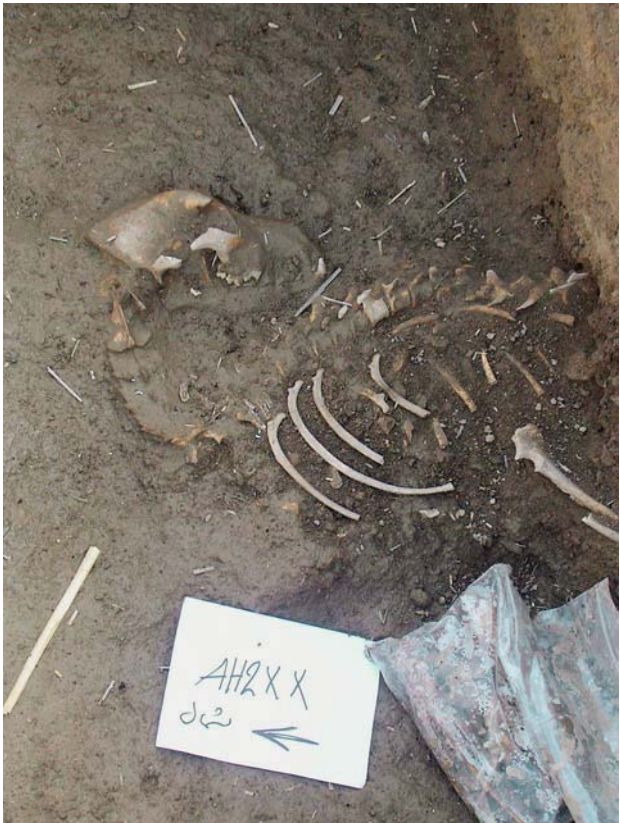


Plate 4. Dog skeleton found in AH2XX Trench (Mahfrouzi 2003).



Plate 5. Position of the human skeleton and dog crock burial in T.T.M Trench (Mahfroofzi 2006).



Plate 6. The crock burial of a dog.

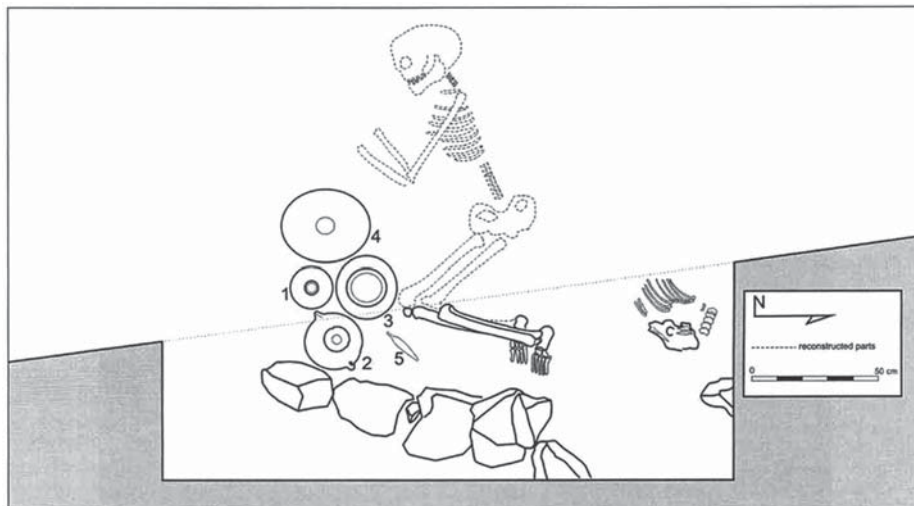


Plate 7. Human burial and remains of dog skeleton in Tappeh Eshgh (Vahdati 2014: 22).

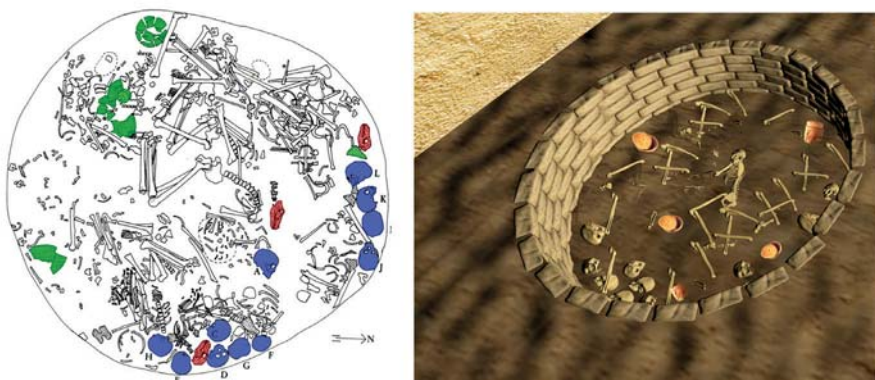


Plate 8. The sketch of grave 1003 in Shahr-i Shokhteh (photo courtesy of Dr. Sajjadi).



Plate 9. Sketch and photo of burials 603-605 in Narges Tappeh
(after Abbasi 2011: fig. 411-412).

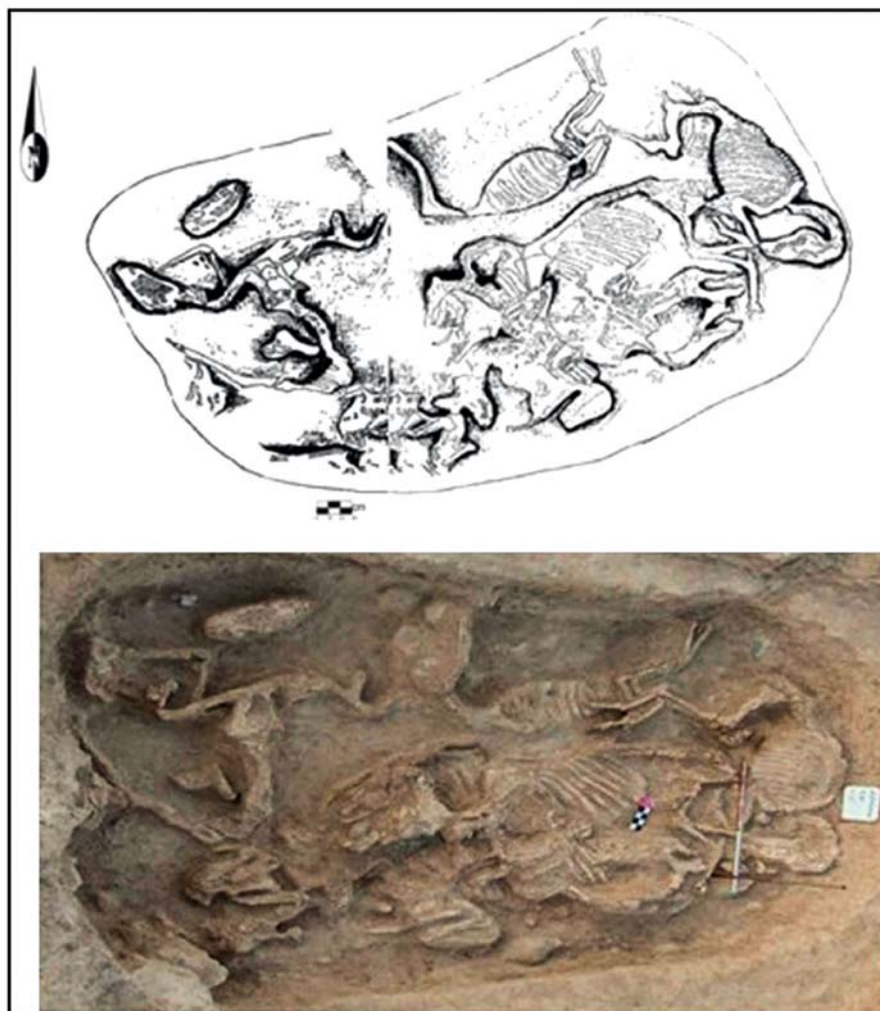


Plate 10. Kurgan 26 containing burial of horses, cows and dogs
(after Rezalou & Ayramlo 2017: 61, fig 15).

AN AXE TO GRIND? ANOTHER LOOK AT THE SO-CALLED “ATTA-HUSHU” AXES

BY

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Abstract: A distinctive corpus of bronze collared axes typified by a curved, asymmetrical blade and found almost exclusively at Susa in early second millennium BCE burials has become synonymous with the Sukkalmah official Atta-hushu. Made in both functional and non-functional forms, these objects were ideologically charged and closely linked to the identity of the individuals who possessed them. Here the authors examine the find contexts of the axes, their chronology and the legitimacy of the label “Atta-hushu” axe. They then contemplate the social, political and economic significance of the axes’ production and use.

Keywords: Elam, Susa, Atta-hushu, bronze, metalwork, axe

Introduction

Excavations at various locations around the ancient city of Susa have brought forth a corpus of distinctive collared axes that had been preserved almost exclusively in funerary contexts of the early second millennium BCE. These axes, collated as type B 3 in J. Deshayes’ widely referenced 1960 study *Les outils en bronze: de l’Indus au Danube (IV^e au II^e millénaire)*, have been dubbed the “Atta-hushu”-type axe based on the existence of examples without provenance or secure context inscribed with the name of this Sukkalmah official who was active around 1900 BCE.¹ Unlike some of the other grave furnishings of wealthy assemblages of the time, the axes do not directly reflect Elam’s participation in the complex “international” exchange networks of the Near East, and Deshayes (1960: 172)

¹ A more precise date for the length of Atta-hushu’s active period is not available, since both the internal chronology of the Sukkalmah rulers and external synchronisms remain uncertain (see De Graef 2013a).

regarded them as a purely Susian product. A series of B 3 axes purported to have come from “Luristan” have convinced several authors of the significance of Luristan in their use (e.g. Tallon 1987a: 84; Gasche 2000: 210) and even production (Gernez 2007: 219), but since only one has been yielded during controlled excavations in the region at Chigha Sabz, Deshayes’ opinion can be upheld (main sites mentioned in text marked in Pl. 1).

This article outlines the corpus of excavated B 3 axes, re-examines the evidence for their find contexts and chronology, and assesses the validity of the widely adopted practice of applying the label “Atta-hushu”-type to the entire B 3 axe corpus. It then contemplates the social, political and economic significance of the B 3 axes within the early second millennium Elamite society in which they were produced and used, and their meaning in the mortuary contexts in which they have been preserved.

Description of the Corpus

Deshayes (1960: 153-230) defined a total of 15 collared (or “socketed”, “shaft-hole”) axe types (A-O) of which four are attested at Susa: 1) type A Irano-Mesopotamian axes with a tubular cuff/sleeve and non-offset collar (Tallon 1987a: 71-81; 1987b: nos. 1-20); 2) type B axes with a collar that exceeds the upper edge of the blade (i.e. at the point where they connect) and has a more or less projecting back (Tallon 1987a: 81-92; 1987b: nos. 21-67); 3) type C Syro-Mesopotamian axes with offset collar (Tallon 1987a: 92-93; 1987b: nos. 68-70); 4) type G axes with non-offset collar without tubular cuff/sleeve, rectilinear axis and round heel (Tallon 1987a: 94-96; 1987b: nos. 71-73).

The axes defined as the “Atta-hushu”-type belong to a subcategory of type B; namely B 3, which is typified by a fanning cambered (arched) blade with asymmetrical sides and often a flat listel or rim border that sometimes extends along the cutting edge (Deshayes 1960: 172-173; an updated 2007 study of ancient Near Eastern weaponry by G. Gernez designates this type as H 2.H). This edge, which renders the axes useless as cutting weapons or tools, is unique to the B 3 type (Tallon 1987a: 82), but does not define all examples. The blade is implanted in the middle or upper half of the collar, which has a circular fitting hole for the wooden handle (at least two axes had preserved traces of wood inside). The collar bulges slightly at the back (or “heel”) and has a concave upper edge, usually rising from front to back. This edge is bordered by a plain or grooved moulded

band that extends into a rounded, sometimes volute-like, protuberance at the back. Below, the collar extends down into a cuff (or “sleeve”) with a thick horizontal moulding above a perpendicularly cut bottom edge. On some examples the cuff is ornamented by additional mouldings or grooves.

Deshayes identified three variants of subtype B 3: variant B 3 a (Deshayes 1960: nos. 1396-1398/Gernez 2007 type H 2.H.b) variant B 3 b (Deshayes 1960: nos. 1399-1406/Gernez 2007 type H 2.H.a) and variant B 3 c (Deshayes 1960: no. 1407/Gernez 2007 type H 2.H.c) (Pl. 2). F. Tallon (1987a: 82-88) catalogued at total of 22 examples of these variants from Susa housed in the Louvre Museum and the National Museum of Iran.

Variant B 3 a: the blade has a long cutting edge and more symmetrical sides; the axe is perhaps inclined. The axes assigned to this group measure 8-9 cm in length (Tallon 1987b: nos. 47-49), apart from one very small damaged model measuring around 3 cm long (Tallon 1987b: no. 67).

Variant B 3 b: the blade has an asymmetrical profile, its upper section sweeping to varying degrees up and outwards high above the collar giving the cutting edge an irregular curve. Sometimes the blade is slightly swollen. Gernez (2007: 146) observed that irrespective of whether the blade is more symmetrical or less symmetrical it would have the same use and effectiveness, as the zone related to the impact remains the same, either because of the inclination of the blade or the protrusion of the upper edge. The completely preserved examples of this variant range in length from 9.4 cm to 12.3 cm (Tallon 1987b: nos. 50-65). Low standard deviations in the dimensions of the constituent elements reveal a standardisation of this type (Gernez 2007: 146, table 2.5).

Variant B 3 c: the cuff is not present below the collar and the upper moulded border with the protuberance is absent. The only known example is 10.3 cm long and carries a name inscription of Atta-hushu (Tallon 1987b: no. 66; Deshayes 1960: no. 1407).²

Variant B 3 b is the most typical form, accounting for the majority of the B 3 axes from Susa. Another B 3 b axe was found in a later second millennium BCE context at the neighbouring site of Chogha Zanbil, and the single excavated B 3 axe in Luristan at Chigha Sabz is also of variant b. Variant B 3 a is rare and B 3 c, which is similar to the other two variants only in terms of its blade, is attested just once by the inscribed axe naming

² Tallon (1987a: 87) indicated that a drawing of the C16 burial contents seems to depict a B 3 c axe, but this axe has never turned up in any collections to confirm its variant.

Atta-hushu (Pl. 2, B 3 c, and axe 1 in table 1 below). In subtype B 3 Tallon also included an unusual 12.1 cm long axe (Pl. 2, bottom right, B 3 -), which she found difficult to separate from the group even though the collar does not project above the blade and lacks the typical mouldings (Tallon 1987b: no. 46, National Museum of Iran inventory no. 502; not known by Deshayes). Besides these metal versions, which would have been cast in bivalve moulds, three small terracotta models of type B 3 have been documented: one of B 3 c (Louvre Sb 9156) and two of B 3 a (Louvre Sb 10092 and National Museum of Iran P 501) (Tallon 1987a: 83; see also Amiet 1986: 156, fig. 81).

The B 3 axes are amongst the many “Iranian-type” bronzes that started to appear on the art market in the late 1920s and were assigned automatically a “Luristan” provenance,³ despite clearly belonging to types typical of other regions including Elam (Begemann *et al.* 2008: 8-9). Tallon (1987a: 84) accounted for around 20 such unprovenanced “Luristan” B 3 axes.⁴ Some exhibit far more variation, including zoomorphic features, than

³ By 1934 Mecquenem (1934b: 227) was already aware of examples of variant B 3 b axes that “one meets in Luristan”.

⁴ Besides the two inscribed B 3 type “Luristan” axes in our table 1 from the Foroughi and David-Weill collections, and the British Museum example that has now been re-scribed to “Susa”, Tallon (1987a: 83) notes one with unusual ribbed decoration acquired in 1954 by the Louvre Museum (AO 20184) and one in the collection of André Godard (De Waele 1982: no. 13). She also lists (Tallon 1987a: 84) Deshayes 1960, nos. 1398, 1405, 1406 and 3088, which is from the Foroughi collection and has a wing-shaped crest and backward-facing bird head instead of the protuberance on the back of the cuff. Calmeyer (1969: 48) connected this axe to the “Atta-hushu” axes, which seems to have fostered the rather confusing adoption of the label “winged axe” of Atta-hushu by, for example, Börker-Klähn (1970: 64) and Carter (1985: 46) (the latter stating without references that Mecquenem found five such axes in the Donjon), who make no apparent distinction between the unprovenanced bird-headed, winged axes and the B 3 a-c variants. O. W. Muscarella (1988: 235-236, no. 335) has since published a comparable axe from the Metropolitan Museum (MMA 65.145.1), which differs only in that the blade issues from an animal head, and accounted for another three of the same type: one in the Louvre Museum (de Miroschedji 1981: pl. XI:4), one in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Moorey 1981: 21, no. 13), and one in the Ashmolean Museum (inv. 1967.1229, Moorey 1971: 46, no. 11). Citing correspondence with Moorey, Muscarella (1988: 236, n. 1) reported that the LACMA and Ashmolean axes were modern forgeries on account of their high levels of zinc. Additional axes cited by Tallon are: Calmeyer 1969: 46-48: group 23 (= types B 3 a/B 3 b) A-K, M-O; examples from a catalogue of the Audouin Hotel Drouot collection sale (21 June 1976, no. 19) and another sales catalogue of Hotel Drouot (26 September 1980, no. 152); De Waele 1982, no. 12 (Godard collection). Muscarella (1988: 234-235, no. 334, MMA 49.23.5) published an axe of type B 3 b in the Metropolitan Museum (probably the same axe as Calmeyer 1969: 48, M).

the B 3 axes examined here and at least two of them have emerged as forgeries (Muscarella 1988: 236, n. 1 citing pers. comm. with P. R. S. Moorey). The attribution of so many unprovenienced B 3 axes and other elaborated versions to “Luristan” has created a false balance in numbers between the Elam and Luristan and the impression of production centres in both regions (e.g. Gernez 2007: 219). In the present study they are largely excluded as they have no contextual value and their historical value is doubtful.

Find Contexts

In the available documentation it is possible to identify 17 contexts at Susa containing a total of 18 variant B 3 a-b axes, leaving contexts for only three of the 22 axes catalogued by Tallon unaccounted for, including the single variant B 3 c axe. All available information about each context is collated in appendix 1. The contexts at Susa are numbered consecutively as C1-17 and two additional entries, C18 and C19, are included for the Chogha Zanbil and Chigha Sabz axe contexts. Only in three instances can a particular axe depicted by Tallon be assigned to a specific context at Susa (no. 47 in C1, no. 51 in C17, and no. 58 in C10), but the variant of the axe is usually known thanks to a combination of archived and published photographs and line drawings.⁵

All but one of the contexts at Susa are early second millennium graves which, as Pl. 3 demonstrates, were distributed fairly broadly across the site. C1-10 were located at the southern tip of the site in the so-called “Donjon” mound, where around 500 burials dating mainly between the mid-third and early second millennium were unearthed by R. de Mecquenem (excavations 1928-1938). His publication of these burials divides them into a group A on the north side of the trench and B on the south side of the trench; a division bearing no other significance than it facilitated depiction of the large number of burials on a single page (see Mecquenem 1943: 74-126).⁶ The level of detail provided is uncharacteristic of Mecquenem’s

⁵ Note though that Mecquenem (1943: fig. 66.7) offered only a single schematic drawing to depict the axes in C4-6, suppressing any possible singularities of each example.

⁶ Mecquenem’s (1943: 74) further clarification of his methodology is worth bearing in mind. “So as not to overload” the presentation he limited the finds of 1934, 1938 and 1939 to the “most important” and for 1935, 1936 and 1937 discarded a quarter of the data for the north side. The presentation is a compilation of the notes of several collaborators: “we

publications of his excavations at the site,⁷ offering a decent amount of information on the position of the axes within the burial and the other objects in the assemblages including ceramics and other dateable objects. The axes occurred between approximately -6.5 and -7.5 m (only the level of C7 is unknown; C1-C6 and C8 shown in Pl. 4, top). Besides the other burials found above and below, which themselves have yet to be properly studied, there is little stratigraphic evidence to aid a precise dating of this ca. 1 m layer. A significant feature recorded at -8 m on the north side of the trench near C1, is a 6 m pavement area “in relation with” a well (presumably its upper end), one or other of which incorporated bricks of Atta-hushu (Mecquenem 1943: 86, A 53) (see C1 and A 53 locations in Pl. 4). The pavement and/or well lay a metre and a half deeper than the burial, which must have been later in date.

Most of the burial contexts with B 3 axes lay in the western half of the mound where Mecquenem (1943: 126-28) reported constructions with mud-brick walls and three main levels of floors at 11 m, 9.60 m and 7.20 m. This latter floor was close in depth to the burials (except C2 where the pit was cut down deeper to 9 m to accommodate a chariot) and its rooms contained inscribed tablets, Sukkalmah-era unbaked clay plaques, probably artists’ trial pieces,⁸ a cylindrical, relief-carved, grey soft-stone vessel depicting vases with flowing water,⁹ and inscribed bricks of the Ur

have gathered the vessels to which they referred in their descriptions, as much as possible according to the depth indicated; we drew the exceptional finds elsewhere.”

⁷ But see Carter (1985: 43-45) for the discrepancies between Mecquenem’s field notes and his final publication of these burials.

⁸ Mecquenem believed that these were “undoubtedly models of drawing for the apprentice engravers of cylinder-seals”; Winter (1996) similarly regards them as artists’ trial pieces. One depicts a “solar tree” (Mecquenem 1943: fig. 92.3) whose sun can be compared with a sun on a terracotta Sukkalmah period plaque showing a lama goddess, also from the Donjon (see Spycket 1992: 126, no. 759). Similar suns, though lacking the wavy projections between the pointed arms, and typically underlined by a crescent appear on early Sukkalmah glyptic including seals of two scribes: Rim-Adad, son of Ibni-Adad, servant of Atta-hushu (Amiet 1972: no. 1682 [sealing]) and Sin-muballit, servant of Kuk-Kirmash (Amiet 1972: no. 1684 [sealing]). Another plaque shows a curly haired, bearded male (Mecquenem 1943: fig. 92.5), likely a nude *lahmu* hero, with a close iconographic match in a terracotta plaque from Tello dating to the Isin-Larsa/early Old Babylonian period (see Winter 1996: 398-399, figs. 1-2).

⁹ Mecquenem (1943: fig. 93) regarded this as an old Babylonian vessel. In the same area he found a relief-decorated bitumen mastic vessel fragment that he dated to the Ur III period (Mecquenem 1943: fig. 94), but it has been redated to the mid-third millennium (Connan & Deschesne 1996: 161, no. 71, Sb 9417).

III rulers Shulgi and Shu-Sin, as well as of Atta-hushu. Collectively, these finds convinced Mecquenem that he was in the presence of a temple and its annexes.¹⁰

Two more B 3 axes were detected in burial contexts, C12 and C11, on the southwest side of the Ville Royale mound. C12 was amongst several burials distributed around a late third millennium temple in *sondage* 1 (possibly disused by the time of their deposition; see Mecquenem 1943: 54-56). C11 was excavated in a residential area in *chantier* B by R. Ghirshman and is the best-recorded axe find context. It had been cut into a street or lane at the front door of a house of level B VII dating to the Ur III occupation of the site.¹¹ In 1973, H. Gasche (1973: 13) assigned the burial to level B V (early), which was dated to the time of Atta-hushu by a document with a transaction that passed under this authority. However, he subsequently regarded this as an error and reassigned the burial to level B VI (Gasche 2000: 209), which contained a document carrying an impression of a cylinder seal dedicated to Mekubi, daughter of Bilalama of Eshnunna and wife of Tan-Ruhuratir—one of the last kings of the Shimashki dynasty (Gasche 1973: 13).

The remaining four burial contexts containing B 3 axes, C13-C16, were excavated in and around the Apadana mound. Mecquenem considered the area on the east side of the Apadana a “funerary mound” due to the density of the burials; however, a residential area whose buildings he simply did not recognise could also be considered a possibility. Burial context C13 lay at 5 m depth below a layer of “Elamite” (ca. mid to late second millennium) tombs and child burials, either next to or underneath the exterior east wall of the Apadana. The only finds noted in the area below were burials containing early to mid-third millennium BCE polychrome painted vessels (Mecquenem 1926: 5). C14 was found directly below the east court of the palace in the “level of the coffins”. Nothing is recorded about the finds above, but below lay burials with painted pottery of the Early Dynastic III/early Akkadian periods (Mecquenem 1924a: 2-3). C15 lay at

¹⁰ Winter (1996: 398) regarded the context as “confused”, however, the finds in the area give good grounds for interpreting the building as a temple; presumably including an artists’ workshop producing cultic imagery.

¹¹ Documents found in B VII mention several years of the reign of Shu-sin and the first year of his successor Ib-bi-sin; its end is linked to the end of the Sumerian occupation and precedes the deportation of Ib-bi-sin to the mountains of Elam by about 20 years (Gasche 1973: 13).

2-4 m depth under the pavement of the Achaemenid palace central court. Close to it, resting at 7 m below the pavement, were a pair of large vaulted tombs labelled F and G, the latter containing a ribbed coffin (Mecquenem 1922a: 7-8, figs. 26-27). Both tombs had been dug into Ur III period occupation going by the numerous Ur III tablets collected in their vicinity at depths of 4-7 m, and both are distinguished by the fact that “most often” they carried inscriptions of Atta-hushu, some referring to his dedication of a bridge,¹² others to a temple.¹³ Presumably the bricks had belonged to a temple (or temples) commissioned by Atta-hushu and were reused in these tombs. Thus we have the following situation: a) two tombs at ca. 5-7 m depth (tomb F stood 1.64 m high) cut into an Ur III level, presumably post-dating Atta-hushu but still probably dating to early in the Sukkalmah period based on their wealthy contents and stratigraphic position; b) our coffin C15 resting somewhere between 1 and 3 m above, i.e., at 2-4 m depth. There can be little doubt that C15 post-dates Atta-hushu, but by how much is unclear. A date in the first quarter of the 18th century at the height of Sukkalmah influence would be a reasonable assumption, though a burial of two infants at 2 m depth with late Sukkalmah/early Middle Elamite figurines (a naked male lute player, three nude women and a bed; see Mecquenem 1922a, fig. 16) could suggest a later date.¹⁴ Nothing is known of the precise location or details of the final context C16.

The last findspot at Susa, C17, was completely different: the axe was uncovered near a “hoard” or “foundation deposit” that lay under a pavement adjacent to a temple of Inshushinak on the Acropole mound. The deposit was composed of objects spanning over a thousand years, the most recent being manufactured in the 12th–11th centuries (Mecquenem 1905: 81; for dating of the hoard see Álvarez-Mon 2020: 320). Its location in relation to the temple, the types of finds (including worshipper statuettes), and the date-range of the objects suggest this was a cache of votive offerings.¹⁵ While the axe was not part of this deposit, it was probably also

¹² Probably those published as IRS 10, br. 234-256 with no noted context and *ti-tu-ra-am* read as “ramp” rather than “bridge”.

¹³ Possibly IRS 11, br. 257-260 mentioning a temple restoration.

¹⁴ At the same 2 m depth were four more infant vessel burials, an adult pit burial and two tombs, but none are closely datable based on the published contents.

¹⁵ Over the years since its publication, there has arisen a theory that Mecquenem attributed this deposit to a tomb (e.g. Amiet 1966: 414; Tallon 1987a: 83); however, in his original publication of the find, Mecquenem (1905: 61) was quite certain that the objects

a votive offering. C18 was a similar context, a deposit of objects in the antechamber of the temple of Kiririsha East at the neighboring site of Chogha Zanbil, possibly dating to the late 14th/13th centuries. As P. Calmeyer (1969: 47-48) noted, the B 3 axes in both C17 and C18 had either remained in circulation for centuries as heirlooms or been rediscovered more recently and (re-)deposited as offerings to divinities.

The single B 3 axe excavated outside of Elam was found at Chigha Sabz amongst a group of early second millennium BCE objects assumed to have belonged to a pit burial, even if the bones were no longer present. The excavation report stated that this assemblage was as rich as that of a burial in the same plot where the bones had been preserved (M x3), and that a burned clay basin was uncovered nearby (Schmidt *et al.* 1989: 24). This naturally calls to mind the clay coffin burials in which the axes were usually found at Susa, however, there is no further information about this find.

Dating of the Corpus

It is often assumed that the manufacture of the distinctive and homogeneous corpus of B 3 axes can be dated within a relatively narrow timeframe to the rule of Atta-hushu (e.g. Calmeyer 1969: 46-48; Carter 1985: 46). Therefore, the axes themselves are generally considered the most datable objects in the burials in which they occur. But if we set aside the inscriptions, can any further dating information be extracted from the remaining evidence in the contexts just described? With its well-recorded findspot, C11 in the Ville Royale *chantier* B provides important stratigraphic information for the upper end of the axe production timescale. As noted above, Gasche initially attributed the burial to B V, which contained a document dated to the time of Atta-hushu. This seemed to tie in neatly with the presence of a variant B 3 b “Atta-hushu” axe and hence this date became well-accepted in scholarship. However, the reassignment of this burial to the Shimashki level B VI means that we now have to contemplate the possibility of an earlier date for the inauguration of this variant, which comprises the majority of the B 3 corpus. An earlier date is possibly supported by preserved impressions of a cylinder seal of Kuk-Simut depicting

belonged to a temple foundation deposit, and later he merely suggested that they were objects *looted from* tombs and redeposited as temple offerings (Mecquenem 1943-44: 141).

what appears to be an axe with a flared, asymmetrical (?) blade typical of the B 3 subtype (with a rear wing like unprovenanced examples “from Luristan”?) being passed between two human figures, one seated, one standing (Pl. 6a) (Louvre Museum Sb 2294; Amiet 1966: 258, no. 187; 1972: no. 1677).¹⁶ The seal carries the inscription “*Idaddu, ensi of Susa, beloved hero of Inshushinak, son of Tan-Ruhurater, to Kuk-Simut the tep-pir, to his beloved servant, has given (this seal)*” and may represent its owner receiving the axe from Idaddu II, governor of Elam and future king of Shimashki (see Álvarez-Mon 2020: 168, pl. 60g). The scene differs from the classic intercession scene in that the seated figure is human (the divine horned headdress is absent) and the lama goddess no longer needs to act as divine mediator for the standing human figure; rather, she stands behind him. Another axe is possibly shown on a seal of Imazu, son of Kindattu, king of Anshan, preserved on a legal contract. It is being passed between a standing figure in a long garment and a (lower-status?) figure in a shorter garment, possibly in the context of an investiture; here the lama goddess is conspicuously absent (Pl. 6b) (tablet no. 2514, National Museum of Iran; see Amiet 1966: 257, no. 186; 1972: no. 1679, pl. 157; Álvarez-Mon 2020: 167, pl. 60f).

Stratigraphic information is meagre for the other axes excavated by Mecquenem, offering no more than a broad early second millennium BCE date: C1, C3-C6, and C8-C10 in the Donjon lay within a 1 m layer (chariot burial C2 was deeper and the depth of C7 is unknown) roughly associated with the level of a temple complex preserving bricks of Shulgi, Shu-Sin and Atta-hushu; C12 was amongst a series of burials dug in around a temple of Shulgi in the Ville Royale *sondage* 1 and should slightly post-date it; and C1 in the Donjon and C15 under the Achaemenid palace central court pavement were described, respectively, in relation to a pavement

¹⁶ Four sealing fragments from the Acropole at Susa (Sb 2033 + 2294 + 2299 + 6972; see Potts 2016: 137, tab. 5.4). Even if the flared blade is reasonably clear, the curved profile of the head is much closer to the “hammers” excavated in the Donjon and *chantier* 2 of the Ville Royale (Mecquenem 1953: 79-80, fig. 2.2). Pittman (1984: 76-78) interprets the “winged axe” as a predecessor to a simplified Sukkalmah version, highlighting one with a dragon-head spitting a blade in the Inshushinak votive deposit at Susa; see Amiet 1966: 407, fig. 307; Tallon 1987b: no. 192. This object is considered a likely import from either Central Asia (Amiet 1980: 162, n. 28), or less likely from Kerman (Miroshedji 1981: 20). Tallon (1987a: 84, after Calmeyer 1969: 48) follows the axe’s line of descent further back to the inscribed Shulgi “hammer” (published in Amiet 1966: fig. 176; Tallon 1987b: no. 195).

and/or a well and tombs with inscribed bricks of Atta-hushu. J. Börker-Klähn (1970: 90) concluded from the C1 context that the B 3 axes were made somewhere between the reigns of Atta-hushu and Sin-kashid (a contemporary of Warad-Sin of Larsa who reigned in 1834-1823 BCE; see Potts 2016: 155) and transferred this date to the incised grey-wares and bitumen containers found with B 3 axes in other burials.¹⁷ The position of C15 could indicate an even later date than this.

Additional dating criteria can be sought in the material of the graves (details in appendix 1). All but two of the B 3 axe burials at Susa were typified by the deposition of the body underneath an overturned coffin, which usually had applied horizontal mouldings on the exterior walls (the C3 coffin was published as a plain-walled type but had one moulding in Mecquenem’s field notes; nothing is known of the C12 coffin). Mecquenem assigned these moulded coffins with typically rich assemblages to the Ur III period (Pl. 5, top, shows two B 3 b axes included amongst typical “Ur III” goods from moulded coffins). However, none of the coffin burials across the site contained ceramics of the distinctive Ur III corpus, so it is reasonably safe to rule out a date earlier than the Shimashki period. Mecquenem attributed the plain-walled coffins with poorer assemblages to a second phase of coffin use at Susa dating to the “reign of Hammurabi” (but oddly, later showed a B 3 b axe and an Isin-Larsa incised grey-ware vessel amongst objects he considered typical of this later phase; see Pl. 5, bottom). Although the general pattern supports a later date for the plain coffins, in some cases their use did overlap with moulded ones so the stratigraphic argument for separate moulded and unmoulded coffin phases cannot be strictly upheld.¹⁸

Ceramic finds in the B 3 axe burials generally suggest Shimashki or early Sukkalmah dates, but as Gasche (1973: 13) noted in the *Ville Royale chantier* B, the material of the Shimashki level B VI and the early Sukkalmah level B V is so homogenous that it can be difficult to attribute a vessel to one level or the other. C11 contained B VI forms and C1 and C13 contained a mix of B V and B VI forms. C3 may be slightly later as it contained a ceramic vessel with a flared narrow foot (C3, no. 7) common

¹⁷ Carter (1985: 46) placed five burials with axes above this pavement, but none are particularly close to it.

¹⁸ Analysis of coffin use in Wicks, paper in preparation, “*Introduction, Use, and Re-use of Coffins in the Shimashki and Early Sukkalmah Periods in Susiana*”.

in the Ville Royale A level XV (ca. 18th century). Ceramics were not recorded in the other burials, the less datable metal vessels being predominant. Two bitumen mastic vessels (C4, C11), an “Isin-Larsa” incised greyware vessel (C6), and a related painted vessel (C1), could again date to either the Shimashki or early Sukkalmah period. Two cylinder seals should have aided a dating of their respective burials (C2, C4), but nothing is known about them.¹⁹

The Chigha Sabz burial (C19) has been dated to Giyan IVc-III/Middle Bronze Age I (ca. 2000-1800/1750 BCE) (chronology following Gernez 2007: 146). The tripod bowl in its assemblage (no. 7) can be compared with the imported tripod bowl in C11 at Susa, and its drinking vessels (nos. 4-5) are of a form attested at Susa in the Ville Royale A level XV (ca. 18th century) (Gasche 1973: 34, Pl. 16.2-3). Both forms provide a link between Susa and Chigha Sabz, complementing the picture provided by the axe.

From their homogeneity, deposition contexts, and distribution it can be concluded that the B 3 axes were manufactured in a workshop at Susa within a relatively short period, presumably under the authority of the ruling family(s). From this centre of production, according to current knowledge, the axes reached no further than the Pusht-e Kuh region. A review of dating evidence has indicated a production within the first century or so of the second millennium, possibly beginning in the Shimashki period, corroborating Tallon’s (1987a: 83) “Isin-Larsa and beginning of the Old Babylonian Period” date.²⁰ This corresponds to a time when shaft-hole axes were exhibiting an increasing variety in form, particularly in Iran (Moorey 1994: 262).²¹ A continued use of the axes as heirlooms into at least the 18th century is suggested by contexts C1, C3 and C15. The two axes recovered from much later votive contexts at Susa and Chogha Zanbil can be regarded as antiquities by the time they were deposited in their final resting places as either heirlooms or recent (re-)discoveries.

¹⁹ Mecquenem’s (1943: 128-133) discussion of selected “cylinder seals from coffins” in the Donjon may include the seal from C4, but frustratingly he does not state which seal had belonged to which coffin.

²⁰ Though her assessment that the best-dated context (C11) was “contemporary with the long ministry of Atta-hushu” (Tallon 1987a: 84) may have to be discounted.

²¹ Undoubtedly this picture has been greatly aided by the modern forgery business!

The Atta-hushu Link: a False Friend?

Atta-hushu is amongst the first attested rulers of the Sukkalmah (or Epartid) Dynasty who ushered in the period of Elam’s greatest influence and power, when its political and economic leverage expanded across the ancient Near East to shape a network as far as Mari to the west, Dilmun and Magan in the Persian Gulf to the south, and Bactria to the east (Potts 2016: 148). Few Elamite rulers have proved so vexing as Atta-hushu, whose reign exhibits unusual traits raising uncertainty over the extent to which he exercised power in Elam. There are no attestations of his use of the title Sukkalmah; rather, he employed *sukkal* and *teppir* (MDP 28, 4:8), the latter probably signifying “some kind of superior judicial official” (Tavernier 2007: 60), and peculiar titles such as “shepherd of the people of Susa” (e.g. MDP 2: 79 pl. 15, n. 5; MDP 28, 5:4; MDP 28, 6:2; IRS 10:2, IRS 13:2) and “shepherd of Inshushinak” (e.g. MDP 6: 26, pl. 6, n. 3; MDP 28, 3:2; IRS 11:2, IRS 12:2).²² Furthermore, he is never mentioned in legal or economic texts together with a Sukkal or Sukkalmah. F. Vallat (1996: 309-312) argued that he must have usurped power in Susa, aided by Gungunum of Larsa (1932-1905 BCE); a hypothesis rejected by De Graef (2019: 3) who regards him as simply a local ruler within the stratified Sukkalmah political structure. Whatever Atta-hushu’s precise role, he was certainly active in his building activities at Susa, claiming to have constructed temples for Narundi (MDP 6: 26, pl. 6, n. 3, Sollberger & Kupper 1971: 261, IV06f, terracotta vessel), Nanna (MDP 28, 4; André-Salvini 1992: 264-265, “foundation” cylinder [h. 19.1 cm]) and Nin-egal (MDP 28, 5, lentil), and another “beloved residence (of the god)” (IRS 13, brick no. 263; Malbran-Labat 2018: 469). He also constructed a ramp (IRS 10, brick nos. 234-256), and restored a temple of Anunitum (MDP 28, 6, barillet) and another ancient sanctuary (IRS 11, brick nos. 257-260).²³ He seems to have acted as a legislator (Amiet 1988: 81), going by his claim that he fashioned a “stele of justice” (ALAM *kittum*) and “erected it in the

²² He also claimed that he was the *ruhu-shak* of Shilhaha (MDP 28 4:8, 5:5, 6:3; IRS 10:5, 11:3, 12:3, 13:3), making him the first to emphasise his kinship in relation to the female line in this way, which would become a mainstay of legitimisation of Elamite rulership (see Potts 2018).

²³ On an additional brick fragment attesting to his building activity he proclaimed himself the beloved servant of Inshushinak (MDP 2: 79 pl. 15, n. 5).

market in order that the sun [i.e. Shamash] informs those who do not know the just price” (MDP 28, 3 [= IRS 12, brick nos. 261-262]).

While Atta-hushu was undoubtedly one of the most important figures of the early second millennium BCE when the B 3 axes were produced, is it really justifiable to apply his name to the entire corpus on the grounds of one (Potts 2016: 167; Helwing 2018: 128), “some” (Tallon 1987a: 81), “several” (Pittman 1984: 76; Carter 1985: 46), or even a “series” (Amiet 1986: 152) of inscribed examples carrying his name?

Presently it is possible to account for five B 3 axes carrying Atta-hushu inscriptions. These are listed in table 1 as axes 1-5 (axes 2-5 shown in Pl. 7). Three purportedly came from Susa: axe 1, the isolated B 3 c variant, appears to be an authentic object that was found somewhere at Susa and is now housed in the Louvre Museum, axe 2 was acquired by the British Museum through an antiquities dealer, and axe 3, not known by Tallon, was a donation to the Israel Museum. The remaining two axes are said to have come from Luristan: axe 4 was donated to the Louvre Museum by a private collector and axe 5 still resides in a private collection.²⁴ Without a careful and critical analysis of axes 2-5, including a close inspection of the inscriptions under a microscope,²⁵ they cannot be trusted as sources of historical evidence on which to base any arguments. Even if the axes themselves could be proved authentic, the temptation to add an Atta-hushu inscription to increase their market value, and indeed their “historical” value, should not be underestimated.

²⁴ In an apparent attempt to integrate them into the historical record, Amiet (1966: 259) assigned them to Luristan “burial” contexts.

²⁵ Examination of chased and engraved metalwork under a binocular microscope can potentially detect relatively fresh lines, absence of corrosion in the lines, or raised edges of chased lines that should not have survived or, if they have survived, should at least preserve wear patterns (see Craddock 2009: 173).

Table 1 – B 3 axes carrying Atta-hushu inscriptions

Location	Provenance	Details	Inscription	Selected References
axe 1 (Pl. 2, B 3 c) Louvre Museum Sb 6596	Susa “retrieved/brought back” by Mecquenem (per Scheil), not recorded in annual reports or field notebooks ²⁶	variant 3 B c; fanning asymmetrical blade, but otherwise unique as collar lacks the concave upper side with moulding and protuberance, and the cuff is missing; h. 7.3 cm; alloy components As 3.14%, Fe 1.11% ²⁷	Atta-hushu	Scheil 1930: 187-188; Deshayes 1960: no. 1407, pl. XX: 8; Amiet 1966: fig. 188; Tallon 1987b: no. 66
axe 2 (Pl. 7a) British Museum BM 134913	“Susa” acquired through the antiquities market, purchased from the dealer A. Nazar in 1967	variant B 3 b; ²⁸ the blade is one of the more symmetrical examples of this type; h. 9 cm, weight 329.50 g; copper alloy	Atta-hushu	Barnett & Curtis 1973: 120; https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1967-0217-1 , registration no. 1967,0217.1
axe 3 (Pl. 7b) The Israel Museum, IMJ 76.060.0034	“Susa” (gift of Wolf Ladejinsky, Washington D.C., through the America-Israel Cultural Foundation)	variant B 3 b	Atta-hushu	published by CDLI https://cdli.ucla.edu/search/search_results.php?SearchMode=Text&ObjectID=P430013 ²⁹
axe 4 (Pl. 7c) Louvre Museum AO 24798	“Luristan” David-Weill collection (acquired 1933, donated to the Louvre)	variant B 3 b; l. 11.1 cm; alloy contains Sn 4.5%, ³⁰ Pb 0.6 %, As 0.5%, Sb 0.4%, Fe 0.13%, Ni 0.28%	Atta-hushu	Calmeyer 1969: 47, group 23, E; Amiet 1976: 23, no. 28, Begemann <i>et al.</i> 2008: Pl. 18, no. 41

²⁶ Going by its absence in Tallon’s (1987a: table 3) list of B 3 axe finds, it was not recorded in Mecquenem’s field notebooks.

²⁷ Metal composition per Tallon 1987b: 13. A much earlier analysis of the material detected only traces of arsenic and a higher percentage of 2.8% iron (Scheil 1930: 188).

²⁸ Tallon (1987a: 84) was unable to assess the type of the axe, since at the time of writing it had only been published in Barnett and Curtis (1973: 120) without an illustration or adequate description.

²⁹ A reference on the CDLI website to D. R. Frayne, RIME 3/2.07.add05.01, ex. 01 as the primary publication of the axe is incorrect.

³⁰ Composition analysis results from Amiet 1976: 23; a recent study by Begemann *et al.* (2008: Table 2, no. 41) yielded Sn 5.1%.

Location	Provenance	Details	Inscription	Selected References
axe 5 (Pl. 7d) Foroughi collection	“Luristan” Foroughi collection	variant B 3 b	(1-5) <i>Atta-hushu, sister's son of Shilhaha, he who holds the reins (?) of the people of Susa, (6-9) Ibni-Adad, his servant, has given him this bronze axe</i>	trans. Sollberger & Kupper 1971: 261, IV06h; ³¹ see also Dossin 1962: 156-157, no. 12, Pl. XXIII; Calmeyer 1969: 47, group 23, E; Amiet 1986: 152, fig. 84

Axe 1, less easily dismissed, is generally considered a reliable means for dating the entire group of B 3 axes. Nevertheless, it is problematic in its own way. Its provenance was described in vague terms when it first appeared in an article of Scheil (1930: 187-188). It was simply said to have been “retrieved/brought back” by Mecquenem, with no findspot offered. Mecquenem himself never mentioned the axe in his field notebooks and nor did he record it in any of the yearly reports he sent to the French government. But of course his failure to note it in the field may simply mean that the inscription was not visible until it was properly cleaned in the museum.³² A possible passing reference to this axe appears in MDP 25 (Mecquenem 1934b: 227), but the relevant statement is confusing and could refer to examples “encountered” in Luristan.

Contextual speculations aside, the axe in question is a unique variant (B 3 c) and although it possesses the typical fanning asymmetrical blade the other distinctive features that characterise the rest of the group are missing; namely, the concave top of the collar rising toward a rear protuberance, the cuff, and the mouldings at the top and bottom (only a listel borders the upper and lower edge). It is further distinguished from the other analysed samples in the collection by its bronze, which is a copper-arsenic alloy with iron content. The validity of bundling the entire group into the same category as this unique example that lacks some of the most important characteristics of the group is open to question.³³

³¹ For Sollberger (1968: 30-33) the axe was an offering from a subordinate to Atta-hushu, while to Lambert (1971: 217), it was Atta-hushu's offering to his servant.

³² The axe is surprisingly well preserved on the inscribed surface, while much of the rest of the axe is pitted and damaged; even here, the possibility of a modern inscription should be assessed.

³³ It is interesting to note that Helwing (2018: 128) referred to the B 3 a and B 3 b axes as the “Atta-hushu type” based on the presence of the single inscribed axe at Susa, but—

It is the opinion of the present authors that a link between the entire B 3 corpus and Atta-hushu remains to be proven. And, furthermore, we now have to contemplate the possibility that the axes were already being produced before his time. Nevertheless, it is clear that in order to appreciate the function and meaning of the axes, and the significance of their deposition in funerary assemblages it is necessary to contemplate them against a background of social, political and economic circumstances within a century or so of the time in which Atta-hushu held sway over Susa.

Axes of the Living and the Dead in Early 2nd Millennium BCE Elam

Social, Political and Economic Significance of Axes

The axe constituted one of the major components of Near Eastern weaponry and had already become an essential part of the suite of funerary weapons at Susa, as in Mesopotamia, in the centuries leading up to the early second millennium BCE (Gernez 2007: 219, 622).³⁴ Whether or not any of the axes in our B 3 corpus were intended as weapons in any real functional sense, however, remains uncertain. Gasche (2000: 201) highlighted that the cutting edge on the blades of some of the axes, such as that in C11, were sharp enough to enable deployment as actual weapons. Emphasising the small size of the series, with blades averaging 6.4 cm × 8.05 cm, Gernez (2007: 145) noted that the length and shape of the edge suggest that any effectiveness as a weapon depended on sharpness properties rather than on power of impact. In any case, their size, including at least one very reduced model (Tallon 1987b: no. 67), careful manufacture, and later votive use have led some authors to believe that they were purely symbolic ceremonial weapons (Maxwell-Hyslop 1949: 101; Deshayes 1960: 173; Amiet 1976: 20).

Three main terms are attested for axes in our period: *agasalakku/likku* and *ḥaṣṣinnu* and *pāštu/pāšu*.³⁵ The *agasalakku* (CAD A1: 148-149) was

presumably due to its divergent appearance—actually excluded the single B 3 c axe from the corpus of Atta-hushu axes (i.e. citing Tallon nos. 46-65 and omitting the B 3 c axe no. 66).

³⁴ In the Donjon A, for example, axes were found burial nos. 125, 143, 191, 281, 283, 294, 303, 319, whose assemblages variously date between the ED III and the late Akkadian/Ur III period (Mecquenem 1943: 92-103).

³⁵ Other attested words for axes are *qulmû* (CAD Q: 299-300), a tool, weapon and divine insignia, and *zaḥatu*, a battle-axe (Sumerian loanword, written za.ḥa.da) (CAD Z: 13).

employed as a tool but also famed in literary works as a weapon (Richardson 2005: 48, fn. 27); similarly, the *ḥaṣṣinnu* (CAD H: 133) was used to clear brush and chop wood, for example, but also appeared as a weapon in the *Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur*: “large ^{urudu}ḥa-zi-in were sharpened in front of Ur” (Michalowski 1989: 61, 170, line 382; text preserved on tablets mostly dating to the reigns of Rim-Sin of Larsa [1822-1763 BCE] and Samsu-iluna of Babylon [1750-1712 BCE]).³⁶ The ruler who brought Ur to its knees was none other than Kindattu, the 6th king of Shimashki. The few axes mentioned in the published Sukkalmah text corpora from Susa are also *ḥaṣṣinnu*, transliterated by V. Scheil as: ḥa-az-zi-nu-um (MDP 28, 543); ḥa-zi-nu-um (appearing with belts?; MDP 28, 544); and ḥa-zi-in *siparri* (bronze axes) (MDP 28, 545). A more unusual four-bladed (?) ḥa-zi-nu appears amongst offerings to Susa’s tutelary god Inshushinak in a stele of Puzur-Inshushinak (ca. 2100-2050 BCE) (MDP 4: 4-6, pl. 2, col. III:14; CAD H: 133). The *pāštu* was a double-headed axe that sometimes appeared as a divine emblem in legal proceedings in Old Babylonian legal texts (CAD P: 265-266), and the *pāšu* was an axe or hatchet that likewise appeared as a weapon or emblem of gods (CAD P: 267). Precisely which of these terms would have been applied to the B 3 axes is difficult to say. In view of the examples lacking a proper cutting edge, the (presumably smaller) *pāšu* axe/hatchet with an attested “symbolic” function might be a possibility, but we do know that term *ḥaṣṣinnu* was in use at Susa and it was the word chosen to refer to the “axe” in the long inscription on the unprovenanced B 3 b axe in the Foroughi collection (table 1, axe 5; Dossin 1962: no. 12:9).

Since almost all of their findspots are localised at Susa, the B 3 a-c variants were not the kind of axe subject to distribution via commercial trade or gift exchange,³⁷ and can be placed provisionally in Gernez’s category of an “identity weapon” defined by its dissemination within the same culture and no outside borrowing. Unlike other furnishings of wealthy early second millennium graves and even the moulded overturned coffins, the axes do not show close links with Mesopotamia or directly reflect the “international”

³⁶ Arkhipov (2012: 105-106) notes the difficulty of distinguishing between weapons and tools of the same name, including the *ḥaṣṣinnu*, *pāštu*, and *pāšu*.

³⁷ We know from the Mari archives that in the early second millennium weapon exchanges were a tool in diplomacy: in the year Zimri-Lim 10 axes were taken on a voyage to Ugarit to give as gifts (Arkhipov 2012: 105).

exchange networks of the early second millennium BCE Near East. While we do have an excavated example from Chigha Sabz (C19), which as Muscarella (1988: 235) observed provides a “bona fide contact relationship” between Elam and Luristan, as do the imported tripod bowl in C11 and drinking vessels at Susa comparable with those in Chigha Sabz C19, the axe likely remained very close to the originating culture (see discussion of Deh Hossein below). Collared axes often fall into the “identity weapon” category thanks to the artisanal freedom offered by their morphological properties: the choice of shape initially corresponds to technical skills, then, once the shape has been acquired, it becomes a recognized cultural marker (Gernez 2007: 654-655). These axes could be set in contrast to the “epsilon” form axe, at least one example of which was sketched by Mecquenem amongst grave goods from “Ur III” coffin burials (Pl. 5, top and Mecquenem 1924b: 112; Tallon 1987a: 104-105; 1987b: no. 97, Sb 10249).³⁸ The “epsilon” and related axes were thought to have been a key motif of military victory and demonstrate connections with areas west of Elam (Peyronel 2013: 63-64).

Judging by the *Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur* the axe may have been emblematic of the military power of the early second millennium rulers of Elam. Its significance in the Shimashkian political domain, perhaps as a symbol of authority, is suggested by the above-mentioned glyptic images showing a higher and lower status individual passing an axe between them (Pl. 6a-b). In a similarly-dated seal a curved weapon is passed between a seated and standing figure (Pl. 6c sealing, Amiet 1972: no. 2324). This transfer of weapons is a distinct local motif in the Shimashki glyptic repertoire (Roach 2008: 452), which is otherwise almost indistinguishable from Mesopotamian glyptic (Álvarez-Mon 2020: 166), and seems to carry information about hierarchical relationships. Though it is difficult to read the direction of the transfer, it is tempting to view the weapons as insignia bestowed upon individuals in specific positions within the network of Shimashki relations. Indeed, H. Pittman (1984: 78) has

³⁸ Other axes assigned to “Ur III/23rd century” burials in coffins, generally with horizontal mouldings, are a collared axe in the same sketch (Pl. 5 top) (variant A 5 c, Tallon 1987a: 78-79; 1987b: no. 43, Sb 6814), and a shaft-hole axe with a trapezoidal blade and no rear protuberance (Mecquenem 1934b: 232 and fig. 81.9; Schmidt *et al.* [1989: pl. 120] also published a shaft-hole axe [CS 104] from Chigha Sabz with trapezoidal blade). “Axes with folded tongue” were also found in late third/early second millennium burials (sub-type A 1, Tallon 1987a: 100 and table 4, nos. 5-6 and possibly no. 7).

argued that the elaborate “winged” axe seen in glyptic had a special meaning for the Shimashki rulers, perhaps as a dynastic symbol, and that the Sukkalmahs later modified both the form and meaning in the B 3 axes. M. Lambert (1971; supported by Henkelman 2003: 125) regarded both types of axes in a narrower sense as an insignia to mark the office of *teppir* in ceremonial contexts. However, it can be noted that in the Sukkalmah period axes appear neither in the attested glyptic of Atta-hushu who bore this title (Delaporte 1920: S.489; Amiet 1972: nos. 1682, 1683, 2327), nor in the glyptic of any other ruler.³⁹

The production of a significant number of the axes at a single site within a short timeframe may also speak against its link to the judicial office of *teppir*, and indeed any other specific high office held by a single individual, but its function in the legal-religious realm is still plausible. Particularly in view of the lack of functionality of many of the B 3 axes, it is worth contemplating the evidence for axes (*pāštu/pāšu*) employed as juridical symbols representing divine authority in Old Babylonian legal procedures. For example, “the axe of Ningizzida and the *kukkuratu* emblem of Ninurta follow the measuring-line and rod, thus check (the dimensions of) the orchard carefully” (Kienast 1978: no. 159:19) and “they brought the axe of Urash to the house and they inspected (the dimensions of) the house carefully” (Gautier 1908: no. 13:8). Another text documents the hire of a *pāštu* of the foremost divine Mesopotamian arbiter, Shamash (Feigin 1979: no. 442:1).⁴⁰ Even if we cannot prove the use of B 3 axes precisely in this way, a key piece of supporting evidence for the involvement axes in the cultic domain in the Sukkalmah period at Susa is a grey terracotta

³⁹ A triad scheme for the Sukkalmah political hierarchy was suggested by early scholars (e.g. Cameron 1936: 71-72): the Sukkalmah (grand regent) was the principal source of power, and the second and third constituents, the Sukkal of Elam and Shimashki (co-regent) and Sukkal of Susa (junior regent), were dynamically active in Elamite territory. Succession entailed the upward mobility of those in the two lower positions upon the death of the Sukkalmah, leaving the Sukkal of Susa open for the entry of another individual. Some consider Ebarat II—the founder of the Sukkalmah Dynasty and the ninth ruler of the so-called Shimashkian king-list (see MDP 23: III-V; Scheil 1931: 7-8)—and Shilhaha and Atta-hushu as the first Sukkalmah group constituting a hierarchical power division. According to De Graef (2006; 2012), the three rulers had contemporaneously ruled over Elamite territory, with Ebarat II sharing his power with his two subordinate officials. However, this system was exercised only by two generations of Sukkalmahs (Carter & Stolper 1984: 24), and other official titles such as “EGIR SUKKAL (vice Sukkal)” and *teppir* (De Graef 2013a: 2352) were embraced within the structure.

⁴⁰ References cited in CAD entry for *pāštu* 2’.

plaque (h. 5.8 cm, head missing) depicting a now-headless figure who wears the crescent pendant typical of the Sukkalmah-era priestly class and holds an axe in his left hand and a curved weapon in the right (Pl. 6d) (found in VR A XII, 31, *grand bâtiment ouest*, GS 5114; Louvre Museum Sb 5796).⁴¹ The axe is the closest available iconographic comparison to the B 3 type, exhibiting the distinctive flared, cambered blade and a bulge in the back of the collar. Together this figure's adornment and his holding of a B 3 axe could point to his authorisation to act on behalf of the gods in a legal capacity.

Besides the possible symbolic value of the axes, the economic value of their bronze material and the skill and resources required to fashion it into the desired form cannot be overlooked. While copper was readily available on the central plateau of Iran (Anarak-Talmessi, Veshnoveh and Arisman) (Potts 2007: 126), tin was much more difficult to come by as it occurs infrequently in southwest Asia. In the early second millennium, Elam played a central role in controlling the trade of this highly prized, expensive mineral, some of which may have been arriving from the Badakhshan region of Afghanistan together with lapis (Potts 2016: 158).⁴² An additional significant source far closer to Susa has been recently discovered by an Iranian-German team at Deh Hossein around 45 km southwest of the modern city of Arak at the northeastern border of Luristan. Studies of this deposit, which contains copper, arsenic, tin and lead (Momenzadeh *et al.* 2002; see also Pigott 2011: 284), have raised the possibility that it was a major supplier of tin around southwest Asia from the third to the first millennium BCE (Weeks 2008: 235-236).⁴³ Tin and copper could have been transferred along with other minerals from the Luristan region to the Susiana plain (see Alizadeh 2008: 39-69), fostering an important economic link between Susa and the area of Chigha Sabz where the axes were found.

⁴¹ Spycket (1992: 127-128, no. 775) regards the plaque as a Sukkalmah-dated object, more ancient than the level in which it was found. Another Ur III/Shimashki-dated plaque may show an axe, though not the same type, in the left hand of a striding male figure in a short garment (Spycket 1992: pl. 57, no. 417). This figure could perhaps be wearing a cap of the type worn by the individual in our C14.

⁴² Based on Old Babylonian and Assyrian textual evidence, Muhly (1973: 293) proposed a probable eastern or northern source coming from Susa to Eshnunna via Der and then from Eshnunna to Mari via Sippar in the first half of the second millennium BCE.

⁴³ Utilisation of the source during the Sukkalmah period, and probably earlier is confirmed by a calibrated radio-carbon date of 1775-1522 BCE from charcoal found in an intermediate layer of the mine (Nezafati *et al.* 2006: 3-4).

Even before the discovery of the Deh Hossain deposit, Amiet (1988: 81) had already postulated that Elamite authorities were in the area organising the metal trade.⁴⁴ He saw the presence of B 3 axes in Luristan in terms of an Elamite takeover, envisaging their use as insignia bestowed upon vassal rulers or on Susian functionaries sent to live amongst the local populations (Amiet 1986: 156).

Whether in the form of ingots or finished objects, bronze was a valuable product (Cuénod *et al.* 2015: 34). Even if there had been an increased incidence of tin use in bronze in the early second millennium, which is hardly surprising given Elam's access to tin in this period (Potts 2016: 166), tin-bronze was still restricted to objects for display purposes to demarcate high-status individuals. Probably due to a combination of the relative scarcity and expense of tin and the aesthetic properties of the tin-bronze alloy—a glimmering golden shine—it was not employed for ordinary weapons used in battle. These were instead made in cheaper arsenical copper which shared almost identical mechanical properties to tin-bronze (Steinkeller 2016: 135-136). The metal composition is available for only three excavated examples, and two of them, both variant B 3 b, are made of tin-bronze (Tallon 1987a: 395). One contains 5.4% tin (Tallon 1987b: no. 58, from our C10), and the other is a particularly valuable axe with a high 15% tin (Tallon 1987b: no. 50, find context unknown). The third axe is the unique B 3 c variant carrying the name of “Atta-hushu” and is instead made of arsenical bronze with a notable presence of 1.11% iron (Tallon 1987b: no. 66). It is difficult to explain the production of such an axe in dull silvery arsenical bronze rather than golden tin bronze (visual properties of arsenical and tin bronze after Steinkeller 2016: 136).

The frequent quantification of the weights of the axes in texts, albeit outside of Elam, suggests that a standardised weight was a significant aspect of their production and at least part of their value must have lain in their metal weight.⁴⁵ We were unable to obtain the weights of the provenanced axes for this study, but the inscribed example from the British Museum is listed as 329.50 grams (axe 2, table 1), approximately matching

⁴⁴ Amiet (1986: 156, in reference to Bottéro 1957) noted that axes of bronze and silver, sometimes with a plating of gold, were given to functionaries.

⁴⁵ According to Gerné (2007: 662), besides their symbolic value, weapons in deposits could have been valued for their metal much like ingots. An analysis of lances from Byblos, for example, reveals four classes: 87, 125, 165, 205 g, which may correspond to fractions (sixth, quarter, third, half) of the mina.

the $\frac{2}{3}$ of a mina weight of a *pāšu* appearing in the Mari archives (Limet 1986: no. 497). An additional economic dimension of axes has been postulated by scholars who emphasize that the Sumerian word for “shekel” was *giĝ₄* (GIN₂) “axe”, referring to the *pāšu* axe. The shekel (Akkadian *šiqḷu(m)* lit. “weighed out thing”) equated to 8.33 grams (but was also used to measure area, volume and capacity; see CAD Š3: 96-99) and was the principal unit used to measure silver (Bartash 2019: 60) and other expensive commodities, including metals, wool, resins and gems (Gaspá 2019: 124). The scholars in question purport that the word for shekel is no accident, going back to a use of miniature axes as currency (or “representational money”) (e.g. Powell 1996: 238; Reade 2002: 249).⁴⁶ However, V. Bartash (2019: 61) has criticised this origin theory on the grounds that the signs for axe and shekel were in fact initially different, but had become so similar by the late third millennium that they were conflated by lexicographers. While Bartash (2019: 60-63) does acknowledge that tiny axes of silver were produced somewhat after the emergence of the shekel,⁴⁷ he adds that other types of tools were also made in miniature and that the *pāšu* axe in question was far heavier than a shekel, being made in a 1 and 2 mina size equating to about 0.5 and 1 kg (the *agasalakku* axe also weighed about 2 minas; see Grice 1919: 227; CAD A1: 149).⁴⁸ In any case, the use of our B 3 axes as currency can be safely ruled out.⁴⁹ At the time of their production silver was the accepted currency⁵⁰ and appeared frequently in

⁴⁶ Powell (1996: 238, fn. 78) cites rare attestations in cuneiform documents of axes as a money form in reference the CAD H: 134, *ḥaššinu* (d) and asserts that axe hoards were ubiquitous in the archaeological record with an odd reference to Einzig’s (1966: 231) mention of ‘celts’ believed to have served as currency in Gaul. Chronological and geographical distance does little to encourage the attribution of the comparatively few tin-bronze axes in Mesopotamia and Elam to a representational money system.

⁴⁷ P. R. S. Moorey (1994: 237, citing Bottéro 1957) stated that silver money was cast as standard ingots or cut from ingots in sufficiently regular pieces from an early date, with forms including miniature axe heads.

⁴⁸ CAD P: 268 *pašu* b cites a text from Mari referring to the purchase of a cover for a *pāšu* [axe] of the two mina size and another for the one mina size (*Textes Cunéiformes du Louvre* [TCL] 19 61:25), and the casting of huge axes weighing three talents each (George 1999: 20, Old Babylonian Gilgamesh standard version, tablet II, Y. 165).

⁴⁹ The authors appreciate the advice of P. Daneshmand on the shekel/axe question, and especially on the necessity of dismissing the idea that axes were used as representational money.

⁵⁰ Peyronel 2019: 68, with refs.: “At the end of the 3rd millennium BC (Ur III) written sources unambiguously record the use of silver as a currency that functioned as a means of equivalence, exchange/payment and wealth accumulation.”

texts at Susa as a means of payment for purchases, interest on loans, and penalties for breaches of contracts (for some relevant Sukkalmah period texts see MDP 22, nos. 19, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 40-47, etc.).

Axes in Funerary Contexts

There is no doubt from the ritual practices archaeologically attested in the burials (deposition of grave goods, vessels and sacrificial animal offerings) that Susa's early second millennium BCE society believed in an existence after death. Further insights into beliefs about the afterlife, in particular the need for the living to provide for the dead family members, can be gleaned from textual evidence.⁵¹ A unique group of seven "funerary texts" (MDP 18, 250-253, 255-256, 259; Steve & Gasche 1996: 332-333) found in a late Sukkalmah period tomb at Susa appears to detail what happens after a person dies.⁵² They speak of a journey down to a dark and miserable netherworld where "water and pasture" are rare and, at its conclusion, a judgement pronounced by Inshushinak "in the pit" (tablets 1-3, Tavernier 2013: 475-476). Significantly, they suggest that the social status of a person was important: "They have placed the recumbent one near important people, those who possessed land, who possessed sheep and goats and who did not have rivals" (tablet 3).⁵³

An analysis of individual social identity in the B 3 axe burials is facilitated by their discrete assemblages of single individuals whose sets of grave goods were not contaminated by prior or subsequent interments (apart from C15 where the coffin contained remains of two skeletons). Though conclusions regarding funerary traditions are difficult to draw from the fairly limited number of our samples, it is immediately striking from table 2, which shows the main classes of objects found in the axe

⁵¹ A Sukkalmah period legal text from Susa (MDP 23, 285) attests to the practice of *kispu*, which refers primarily to the care of the dead in the afterlife through the provision of food and water. It records the allocation of a man's entire estate to his daughter, Narubti, who is in turn contractually obliged to care for him after his death by providing his *kispu* offerings.

⁵² The tomb was excavated to the east of Darius' palace. The genre of these texts, unparalleled in Mesopotamia and exemplifying the use of Akkadian in Elam to render local concepts and procedures (De Graef 2013b: 273), probably belonged to a composition intended to prepare a person for the afterlife (Tavernier 2013: 478).

⁵³ For differing interpretations of this statement, see Steve & Gasche (1996: 337), and Tavernier (2013: 479).

burials, that their funerary offerings are distinguished by their diversity and value. Besides the B 3 axes made of a costly mineral in an often non-functional shape, the luxurious goods included various other weapons, precious metal and copper/bronze adornments, and bitumen mastic and “Isin-Larsa” incised grey-ware vessels, which both appear to have been made at Susa and circulated widely amongst the Susian and foreign elite.⁵⁴ The coffins with applied mouldings were similarly shared with the elite of southern Mesopotamia. They were absent in only two unusual burials: a pit burial of a child (C9) and a pit burial accompanied by a vehicle whose two copper wheel rims were preserved (C2).

Table 2 – Presence/absence of moulded coffins and other goods with B 3 axes

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	19
moulded coffin	x		x (?)	x	X	x	x	x		x	x	x (?)	x	x	x	x	
other weapon(s)	x	x						x			x		x	x		x	x
chariot wheel rim		x															
cu/bronze vessel(s)		x	x	x	x			x		x	x		x	x	x		
cu/bronze jewellery	x			x		x	x (?)	x	x (?)	x (?)	x		x		x	x	x
gold/silver jewellery	?		x	x				x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	
cu/bronze mirror															x		
bitumen vessel(s)				x							x						
incised grey-ware or related	x					x (?)	x (?)										
cylinder seal		x		x													
clay vessels	x		x		x						x		x		x		x

The varied material culture that was removed from the economy of the living and deployed to mark status in burials—even those of children—can be seen in terms of the vertical ranking of groups in the highly complex

⁵⁴ Amiet (1986: 152) notes that bitumen mastic vessels, which belonged to “an important series, characteristic of the Susian civilisation”, are known in Mesopotamia in contexts of the early Old Babylonian period. For the likely Susian origin of the grey-ware vessels, see also Amiet (1966: 266-67). These grey-wares were distributed widely from Gasur to Uruk and from Malyan to Godin-Tepe in the early second millennium (see Peyronel 2013: 59 and Álvarez-Mon 2020: 194-196, with refs.).

society of Elam in the first half of the second millennium BCE. Within this society, the conspicuous consumption of wealth would have aimed at reinforcing, or even enhancing, the high social status of the family and ensuring that the deceased carried this rank into the afterlife.

As noted earlier, unlike some of the other objects in the graves, the B 3 axes were not subject to a wide distribution and are best understood as “identity weapons” with a high degree of cultural specificity. At the broadest level they probably marked an affiliation with the Shimashki and/or Sukkalmah elite at Susa, but whether this identity can be narrowed down any further is difficult to say. Since they were not always functional, their use to designate a person’s high status as an authority in a legal-religious setting seems possible in view of the symbolism of axes in Old Babylonian legal texts.⁵⁵ However, the military aspect of axes is difficult to ignore, even if they were used only in ceremonial contexts. In general, Susa’s funerary record reveals little attempt in either the axe burials or any other burials of this time to demarcate a “warrior” class, so we can probably envisage symbols of military function as a corollary of high socio-economic or political status.⁵⁶ The final publication of the Donjon trench, for example, included 103 early second millennium elite coffin burials, of

⁵⁵ Alternatively, could it be possible to connect this legal symbolism with the afterlife judgement in the above-mentioned seven funerary texts? The legal context is clear from the presence of Inshushinak’s two assistants, Lagamal and Ishmekarab. Lagamal (“he who has no mercy”) is presumably the accuser, while Ishmekarab (“he who hears the prayer”) acts as lawyer/defender (Tavernier 2013: 483). Like Inshushinak, Ishmekarab was a judicial god with an important role in the world of the living, featuring regularly in legal texts from the Sukkalmah period onwards (Lambert 1976-80; Tavernier 2013: 481). The judgement seems to be associated with some kind of a weighing, but whether it arises directly from the weighing is unclear (tablets 1-3, Tavernier 2013: 478). This transcendental line of thought becomes more tempting in view of placement of weights and balance plates (Peyronel 2011: 111-116, scale type 3) with the dead at Susa in burials slightly later in the Sukkalmah period (Wicks, paper in preparation “*Weighty Matters: Weights, Scales and their Meaning in Elamite Graves*”). Correctness of measures seems to have been a preoccupation of Sukkalmah rulers, who were sometimes depicted with what appear to be duck weights in “Anshanite”/“popular Elamite” glyptic (Connan & Deschesne 1996: 273). In these seals, Ascalone (2013: 53) perceives a manifestation of a three-way link between 1) the king 2) weighing and measuring, and 3) the concept of justice, with weights and scales expressing notions of “rectitude, correctness, and equality”. He adds that the ideology of the just leader may have been embedded in the title *teppir* (Ascalone 2013: 54) used by Atta-hushu, who erected a stele in the market indicating the “just price” (IRS 12).

⁵⁶ For military function as a corollary of high status across the Near East, see Gernez (2007: 658).

which 18, including six of the B 3 axe burials (C1-6), contained weapons. This equates to less than 20% of the total. Furthermore, usually only one weapon was present. Here the B 3 axe burials distinguish themselves: whereas just two of the 12 burials (16.6%) *without* the axes contained other weapons,⁵⁷ three of the six burials *with* the axes (50%) contained other weapons: namely, an axe, arrowhead and mace in C1; an axe, a dagger and three arrows (also a chariot wheel, which perhaps had military associations) in C2; and two axes in C4. As table 3 below shows, this figure extends more or less across the site, with 50% of B 3 axe burials containing more than one weapon, an axe + arrow(s) (C1, C2, C11, C13, C16) and an axe + dagger (C2, C8, C11, C14) being the most frequent weapons to co-occur. Thus, the axe burials do appear more “militarised” on average than other burials with weapons.⁵⁸

Table 3 – Additional weapons in graves with B 3 axes

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
additional axe				x												
dagger		x						x			x			x		
arrowhead(s)	x	x (3)									x		x (7)			x (3)
mace	x															

Whether or not their military aspect was stressed, axes exhibit a very strong and generally adult male identity aspect across the Near East, worn conspicuously in life and frequently highlighted in death by placement in the hands or belt of the deceased (Gernez 2007: 219, 659-660).⁵⁹ In four of the seven instances when the B 3 axes were inside coffin with the body

⁵⁷ Namely, a non-B 3 type axe and dagger (B111), and a dagger and javelin point (B60). Those with one weapon contained: an adze (A2), a dagger/blade (A8, A17, B2, B39), a harpe (A79) a “cane head” (axe or hammer?; see Mecquenem 1943: fig. 66.5) (B82b), a spear point (B15), and arrowheads (A14, B70).

⁵⁸ Thus Tallon (1987a: 88) referred to a “warrior” identity, even if she ultimately saw the axes simply as a mark of the “privilege of a certain class”.

⁵⁹ That weapons were associated with male identity in Old Babylonian society is clear from a bilingual text to facilitate childbirth directing the mother to look at a weapon if she wants to have a son (or a comb if she wants a daughter) (see Winter 1999: 52).

there were no other weapons (C3*, C5, C6, C7) and in one (C4*)⁶⁰ there was only a second axe (see tables 2 and 4), suggesting that the axe was the primary identity marker (only in C11 was the axe recorded in a precise position in relation to the body: at forearm level). In at least five contexts the axe was isolated from the body outside the coffin (table 4) and the central identity markers instead tended to be gold and silver jewellery. A lack of osteoarchaeological analyses prevents any adequate discussion of sex and gender, but the presence of the axes and often other military items suggests that in general we are looking at burials of adult males.⁶¹ However, a necklace and breast-shaped silver pectorals with defined nipples worn on the body in C3 suggest an adult female interment (Tallon 1987a: 88; also note the asterisk (*) in table 4 indicating that the axe may not have been inside the coffin with the body), and earrings might suggest another female in C13. In C9 the axe had been deposited with silver earrings in a child burial. While it could be concluded from this that women and children were entitled to possess weapons,⁶² it should be recalled that not all objects in funerary contexts had necessarily been possessed in life by the individual they were buried with. Therefore, some items in the assemblages, including our B 3 axes, might not have directly marked identity and could instead represent offerings to deities or ancestors.

Table 4 – Placement of B 3 axes in graves (*Tallon [1987a: 85] places axe outside)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	19
axe inside coffin			x*	x*	x	x	x	x			x	?				?	
axe outside coffin	x									x		?	x	x	x	?	
no coffin, in burial pit		x							x								x

⁶⁰ For the asterisked (*) burial contexts, Tallon (1987a: 85) indicates that the field notes placed the axe outside the coffin.

⁶¹ Gasche (2000: 209, fn. 398) regarded the axe as a male-gendered object.

⁶² In the Near East women were not always excluded from the world of weapons, at least in the funerary realm, perhaps because in some populations they were considered equal to men in function or status, or could inherit the right to carry weapons as objects of value from their fathers/husbands, or because social status, which could be marked by weapons, took precedence over gender. In the case of children, a link to inheritance is possible (Gernez 2007: 659).

Concluding note

Bronze axes were a significant element of elite material culture in early second millennium BCE Near Eastern societies, carrying a range of potential meanings both in life and in death. Even if it is difficult to pinpoint a single specific meaning for Deshayes’ subtype B 3 axes, it is clear that they were a mark of social distinction within the hierarchical society of Susa and that they carried a specific referent to the local Susian culture, which was understood at least as far as Luristan. Their symbolic dimensions as insignia of authority variously in ceremonial, cultic and legal contexts have been entertained, particularly in view of the fact that most were not functional. But ultimately, their deposition in elite—usually male—burials, in some cases perhaps generations after their production, probably reflects their function as “identity weapons” broadcasting an affiliation with the Elamite ruling classes.⁶³ While the span of their use and disposal in burial contexts, and perhaps even their production, must have overlapped with Atta-hushu’s reign, it remains to be adequately proven whether the label “Atta-hushu”-type is warranted, given the uniqueness of the single excavated inscribed axe from Susa within the B 3 typology. Therefore, the B 3 axes are best viewed more broadly within the chronological frame of Susa’s late Shimashki and early Sukkalmah era society.

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Abbreviations

CAD	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> , Chicago.
IRS	MALBRAN-LABAT, F., 1995. <i>Les inscriptions royales de Suse: Briques de l’époque paléo-élamite à l’empire néo-élamite</i> , Paris.
MDP 2	SCHEIL, V., 1900. <i>Textes élamites-sémitiques, première série</i> , Paris.

⁶³ This is in contrast to primarily functional weapons with offensive/defensive and economic capital, often produced on a large scale and distributed by the state, not the property of the user and subject to recovery and recasting (see Gernez 2007: 660).

- MDP 4 SCHEIL, V., 1902. *Textes élamites-sémitiques, deuxième série*, Paris.
 MDP 6 SCHEIL, V., 1905. *Textes élamites-sémitiques, troisième série*, Paris.
 MDP 18 DOSSIN, G., 1927. *Autre textes sumériens et accadiens*, Paris.
 MDP 22 SCHEIL, V., 1930. *Actes juridiques susiens*, Paris.
 MDP 23 SCHEIL, V. 1932. *Actes juridiques susiens (suite: n° 166 à n° 327)*, Paris.
 MDP 28 SCHEIL, V. 1939. *Mélanges épigraphiques*, Paris.

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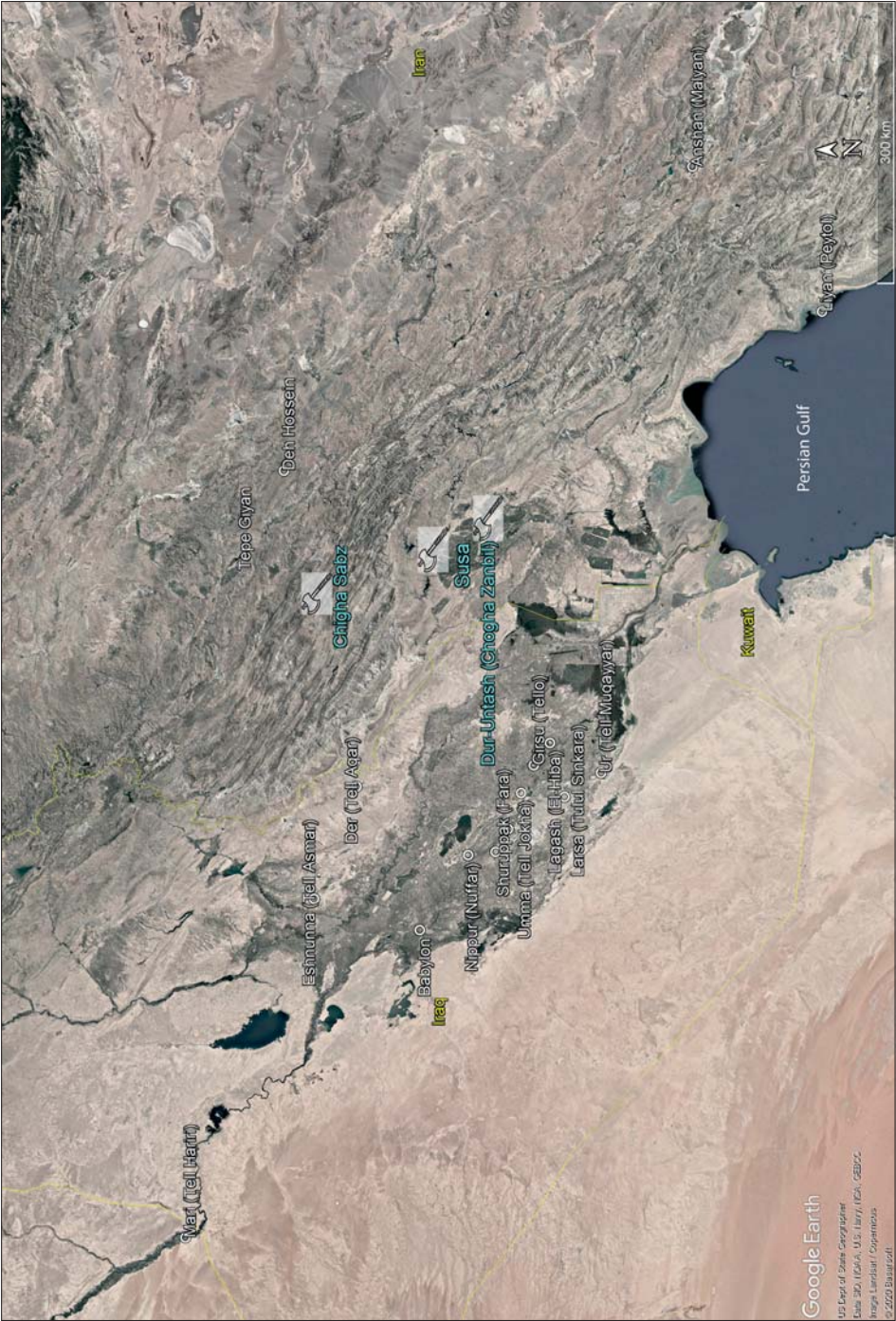
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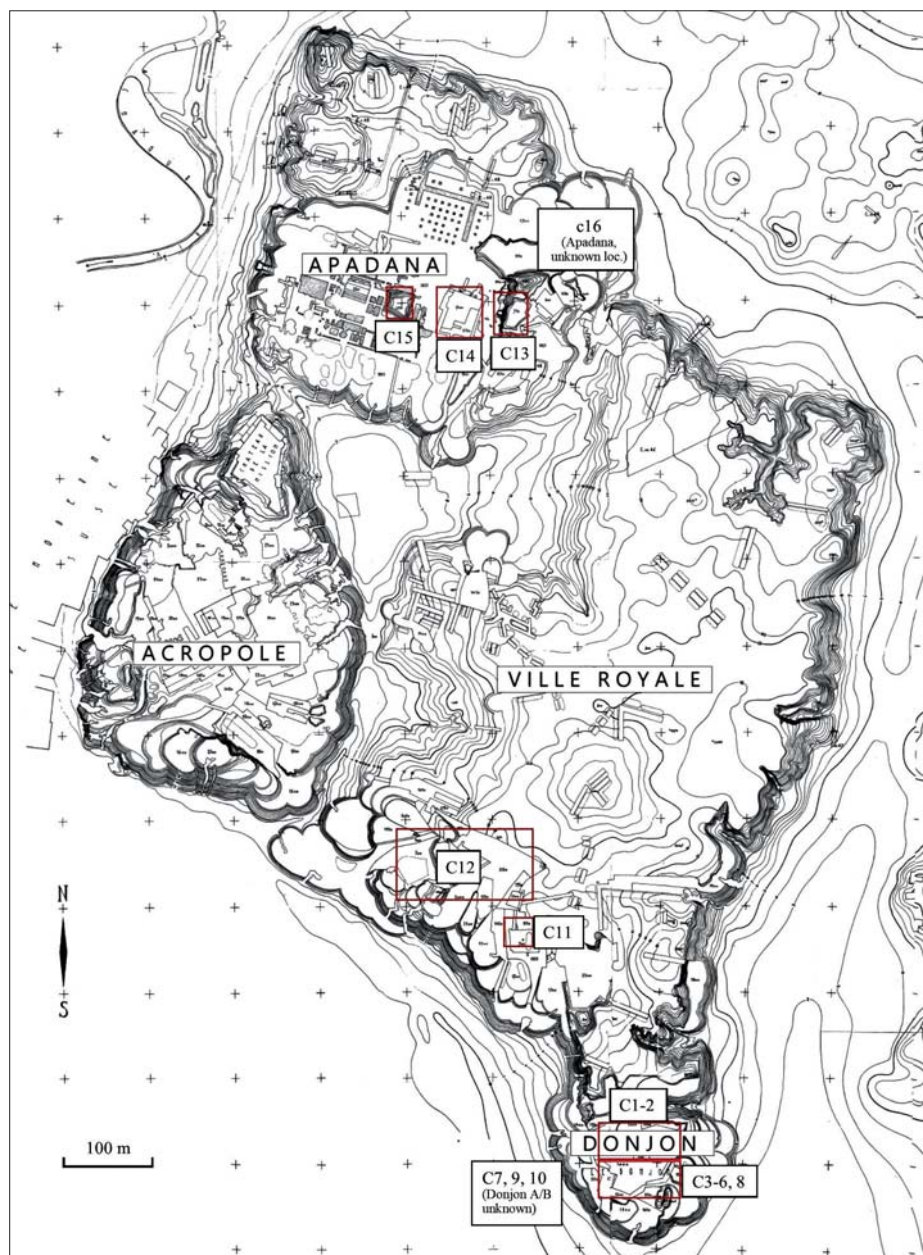
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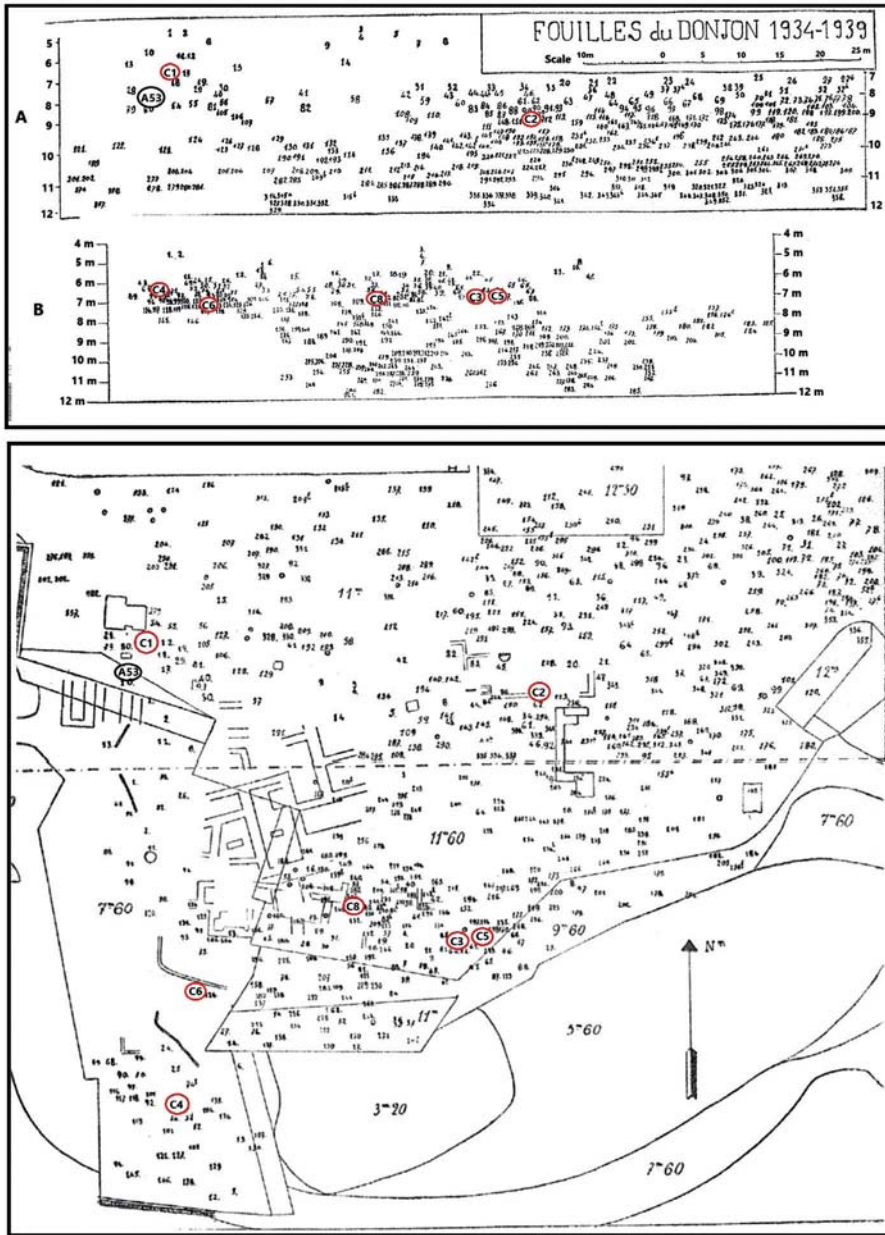
Pl. 1. Map showing main locations in text (Google Earth 2020).



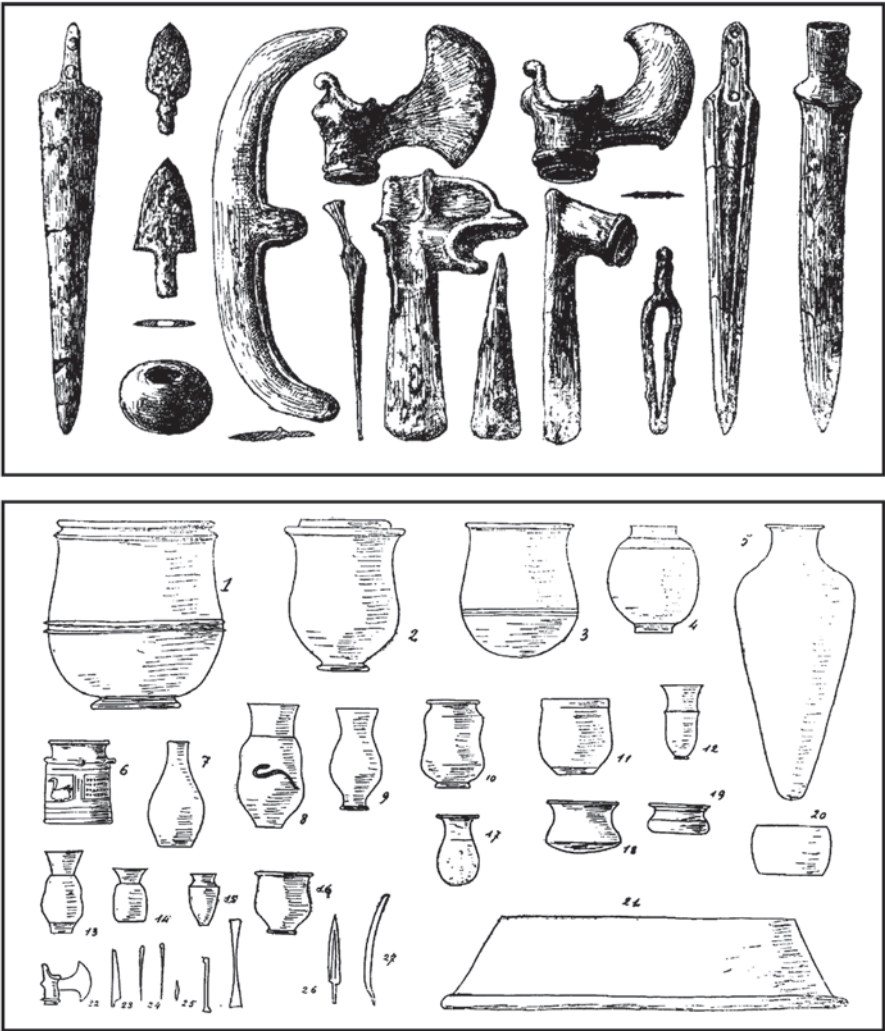
Pl. 2. Axe variant B 3 a (l. 8.0 cm, Louvre Museum Sb 10233, line drawing from Tallon 1987b: 145, no. 47), variant B 3 b (l. 9.6 cm, Louvre Museum Sb 10489; Tallon 1987b: no. 55, photograph courtesy of J. Álvarez-Mon), B 3 c (l. 10.3 cm, Louvre Museum Sb 6596, Tallon 1987b: no. 66; photograph courtesy of J. Álvarez-Mon) and undefined variant B 3 (l. 12.1 cm, National Museum of Iran, no. 502, Tallon 1987b: no. 46; photograph courtesy of J. Álvarez-Mon).



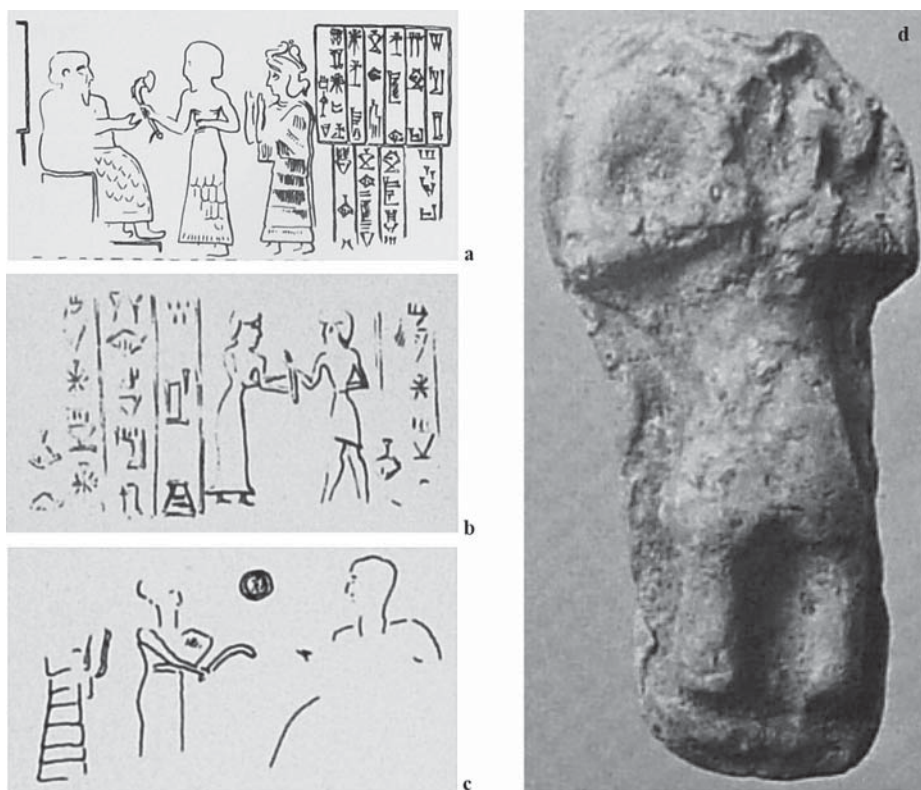
Pl. 3. Topographic map of Susa showing location of axe contexts labelled C1-16 (after Ghirshman 1954: plan 1).



Pl. 4. [Top] section drawing; and [bottom] plan of the Donjon with axe burial numbers circled in red (after Mecquenem 1943: fig. 61).



Pl. 5. [Top] sketch of objects found in “Ur III” coffin burials under the central court of the Achaemenid palace (from Mecquenem 1924b: fig. 5); [bottom] B 3 b axe and Isin-Larsa incised grey-ware vessel amongst objects Mecquenem considered typical of the “Hammurabi” period (from Mecquenem 1934b: fig. 75).



Pl. 6. Line drawings of sealings of: a) seal of Kuk-Simut (from Amiet 1972: no. 1677); b) seal of Imazu (from Amiet 1972: no. 1679); c) seal of unknown owner (inscription not preserved; from Amiet 1972: no. 2324); d) terracotta plaque (from Spycket 1992: pl. 92 no. 775).

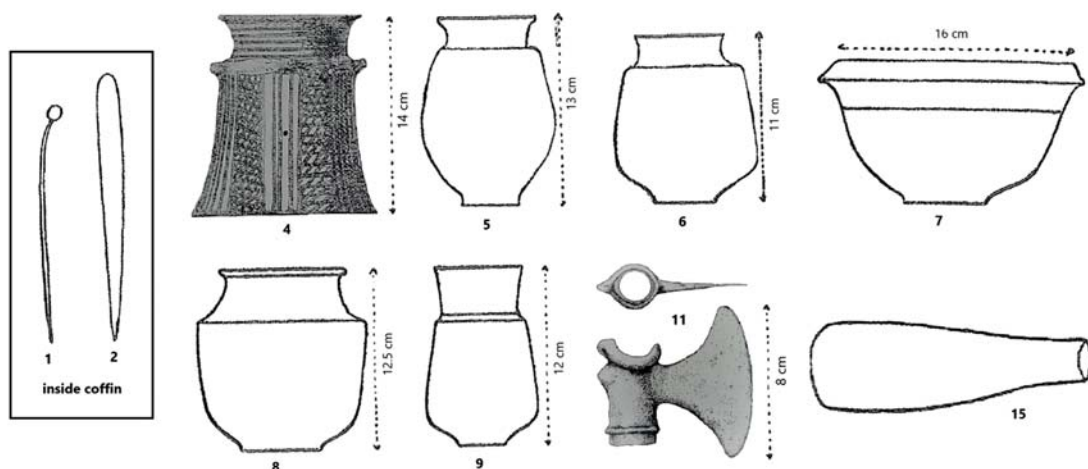


Pl. 7. Inscribed axes in a) the British Museum (from https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1967-0217-1; b) the Israel Museum (<https://cdli.ucla.edu/dl/photo/P430013.jpg>) c) the Louvre Museum (ex-David-Weill collection) (http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=obj_view_obj&objet=cartel_16998_62405_16998_001.jpg_obj.html&flag=true); d) the Foroughi collection (line drawing Amiet 1986: fig. 84).

Appendix 1

Image credits:

- C1. axe after Tallon 1987b: no. 47; remainder of burial contents after Mecquenem 1943: figs. 65.5-9, 66.7, 67.26 67.33, 67.35
- C2. axe after Mecquenem 1943: fig. 66.7; remainder of burial contents after Mecquenem 1934a: fig. 5; 1943: figs. 66.7, 66.11, 66.12, 66.22
- C3. axe after Mecquenem 1943: fig. 66.7; coffin after Mecquenem 1943: fig. 64.1; remainder of burial contents after Mecquenem 1943: figs. 65.5, 65.11, 65.12, 66.14
- C4. axe after Mecquenem 1943: fig. 66.7; coffin after Mecquenem 1943: fig. 64.3; remainder of burial contents after Mecquenem 1943: figs. 66.14, 66.25, 66.29, 83.3
- C5. axe after Mecquenem 1943: fig. 66.7; coffin after Mecquenem 1943: fig. 64.4; remainder of burial contents after Mecquenem 1943: fig. 66.14
- C6. axe after Mecquenem 1943: fig. 66.7; coffin after Mecquenem 1943: fig. 64.3; remainder of burial contents after Mecquenem 1943: fig. 82.1
- C7. –
- C8. burial vessel after Mecquenem 1943: fig. 66.25
- C9. –
- C10. axe from Mecquenem 1934a: pl. 11
- C11. photograph of burial in situ and images of burial and its contents after Ghirshman 1968: figs. 15*bis*, 15a-b, 16, 17
- C12. axe line drawing from Mecquenem 1943: fig. 47.5
- C13. photograph of burial after Mecquenem 1926: fig. 7
- C14. line drawing of burial after Mecquenem 1943-44: pl. 3 and photograph of skull and burial contents after Mecquenem 1924a: pl. 5
- C15. photographs of coffin in situ and grave goods after Mecquenem 1922a: pl. 11, no. 9 and pl. 12, no. 21
- C16. –
- C17. axe after Mecquenem 1905: fig. 184
- C18. axe photograph and line drawing after Ghirshman 1966: pls. LIII: 5 and LXXXIII GTZ 166
- C19. axe photograph from Schmidt *et al.* 1989: pl. 125d; other burial contents from Schmidt *et al.* 1989: pl. 92s, 93k, 94f, 120c, 121i



C1. Susa, Donjon (north side)

Context: burial A 16; level recorded as -8 / -7 m (burial not illustrated)

Details: coffin with four mouldings; oriented N-S (head N), inside the coffin: body laid on right side
inside coffin:*

1. a copper pin (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 67.33)
2. a bone pin (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 67.35)
3. a copper tool

outside coffin:**

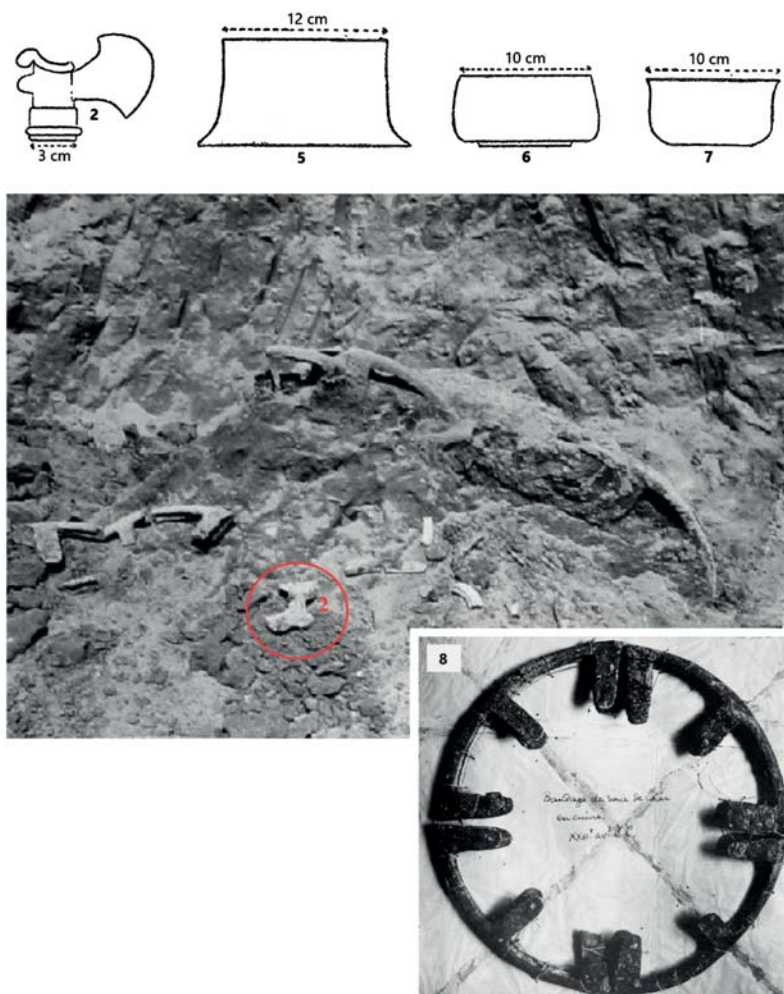
4. painted vessel with four projecting lugs for cords (Louvre Museum Sb 2978, published in Mecquenem 1943, fig. 68.1; Amiet 1966: 266, no. 197); though painted, this vessel appears to be related to "Isin-Larsa" incised grey-wares
5. terracotta vessel/s (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 65.5; cf. Gasche 1973, pl. 25.11-12, VR B V)
6. terracotta vessel/s (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 65.6; cf. Gasche 1973, pl. 25.14, 23, VR B VI)
7. terracotta vessel/s (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 65.7; cf. Gasche 1973, pl. 4.4, VR B VI)
8. terracotta vessel/s (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 65.8; cf. Gasche 1973, pl. 25.28, VR B VII; Carter 1980, fig. 42.3, VR I, level 4)
9. terracotta vessel/s (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 65.9; cf. Gasche 1973, pl. 25.2, VR BV and pl. 25.25, B VI)
10. an arrowhead
11. an axe (variant B 3 a) (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 66.7, Deshayes 1960, no. 1396; Tallon 1987b, no. 47, Louvre Museum Sb 10233)
12. a shovel
13. a sickle
14. a copper-covered bitumen mace head
15. a lead shaft (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 67.26)

Dating notes: at a level of 1.5 m lower than the burial lay a 6 m pavement "in relation with" a well, one or other of which incorporated inscribed bricks of Attahushu (Mecquenem 1943: 86, A 53); the ceramic vessel forms are concentrated in VR B VI (ca. 2000-1900 BCE), no. 8 is comparable with a vessel from a burial dug into the Ur III-dated level 4 in the Ville Royale I trench

Additional comments: *Tallon's report from the field notes includes only a diadem and a silver bracelet inside the coffin. **Tallon excludes the shovel, sickle and lead shaft on the grounds that "it seems that Mecquenem included in the publication objects found previously between -7.5 and -9.5 m"; she also gives a different account of the vessels, citing a white terracotta vessel (cf. Gasche 1973: pl. 25.1 B V), a vessel with a red neck (Gasche 1973, pl. 17.1 B VI/V), and the painted lugged vessel (Sb 2978)

Original publication: Mecquenem 1943: 77; recorded in field notebook entry 12.1.1935

Additional references: Deshayes 1960, pl. XXI: 11, no. 1396; Tallon 1987a: 85; Tallon 1987b, no. 47



C2. Susa, Donjon (north side)

Context: burial A 89 b (so-called “chariot burial”) level recorded as -9 m (burial not illustrated)

Details: pit burial; orientation/body arrangement not provided
assemblage:

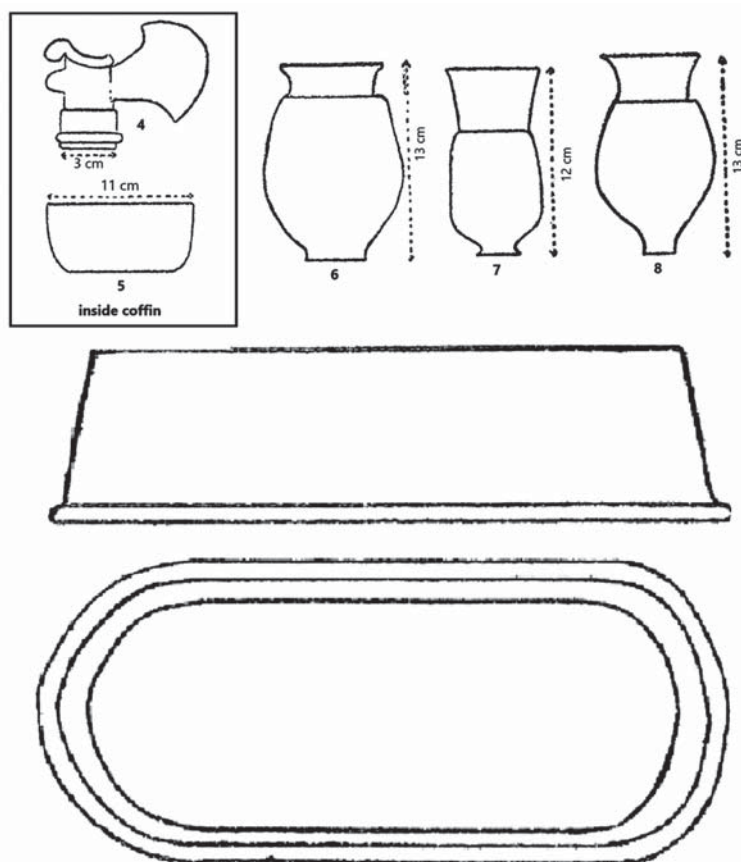
1. a cylinder seal
2. an axe (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 66.7, variant B 3 b)
3. a dagger
4. 3 arrowheads
5. a copper vessel (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 66.11; Ur III/Isin-Larsa comparisons in Tallon 1987a: 212)
6. a copper vessel (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 66.12; early second millennium in Tallon 1987a: 202, var. A 3 b; a similar but shallower form published from early Old Babylonian Gruit 52 at Uruk in Boehmer et al. 1995, Taf. 32d)
7. a copper vessel (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 66.22)
8. 12 sections of copper chariot wheel rims (late third/early second millennium in Tallon 1987a: 302-306)

Dating notes: metal vessels and chariot wheel rims give general early second millennium date

Additional comments: the form of the axe is not clarified in Mecquenem’s publications, but an in situ photo with the wheel rim fragments shows it belongs to the B 3 b type

Original publication: Mecquenem 1934a, fig. 5; 1943: 89; no field notebook entry identified

Additional references: Tallon 1987a: 86, 303, fig. 45



C3. Susa, Donjon (south side)

Context: burial B 62; level recorded as -6.8 (burial not illustrated)

Details: coffin without mouldings (Mecquenem 1943, type fig. 64.1) according to Tallon (1987a, tab. 3, presumably following field notes), however, a single moulding was present; burial oriented S-N (head end not stated), body laid on the left side.

inside coffin:*

1. a gilded silver diadem on the forehead (cf. Tallon 1987b, nos. 1176-1185)
2. a pair of silver pectorals on the thorax (cf. Tallon 1987b, nos. 1188-1195)
3. a necklace of silver, lapis, cornelian and agate beads
4. an axe (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 66.7, variant B 3 b)
5. a copper bowl (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 66.14)

outside coffin:

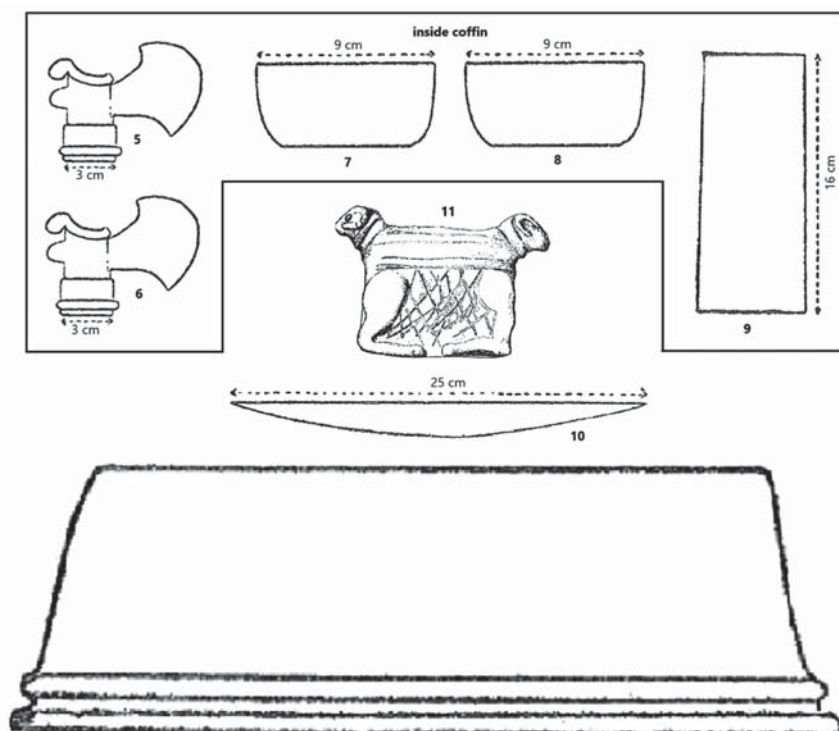
6. terracotta vessel (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 65.5; cf. Gasche 1973, pl. 25.11-12, VR B V)
7. terracotta vessel (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 65.11; cf. Gasche 1973, pl. 24.5, VR A XV)
8. terracotta vessel (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 65.12; cf. Gasche 1973, pl. 24.24, VR A XV, though the neck is considerably shorter)

Dating notes: ceramic vessels compare examples from VR B V (ca. 1920-1830 BCE) and VR A XV (ca. 1820-1740 BCE) suggesting a ca. late 19th century date; precious sheet metal diadems are also typical of early second millennium wealthy burials (see Tallon 1987a: 64)

Additional comments: *Tallon also reports a silver bracelet inside the coffin, and places the axe outside the coffin. She judged that this was a female burial since the pair of pectorals were on the thorax

Original publication: Mecquenem 1943: 111; recorded in field notebook entry 20.3.1935

Additional references: Tallon 1987a: 85



C4. Susa, Donjon (south side)

Context: burial B 69; level recorded as around - 6.5 (burial not illustrated)

Details: coffin (Mecquenem 1943, type fig. 64.3) with seven mouldings (additional mouldings not shown; orientation not provided)

inside coffin:*

1. a cylinder seal
2. 3 silver finger rings
3. 2 copper finger rings
4. **a copper bracelet
5. an axe (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 66.7, variant B 3 b)
6. an axe (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 66.7, variant B 3 b)
7. a copper vessel (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 66.14)
8. a copper vessel (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 66.14)
9. a copper vessel (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 66.25, undecorated; Tallon 1987a: 208, vessel variant B 2 b dating from ca. mid-third millennium to the Sikkalmah period)

outside coffin:

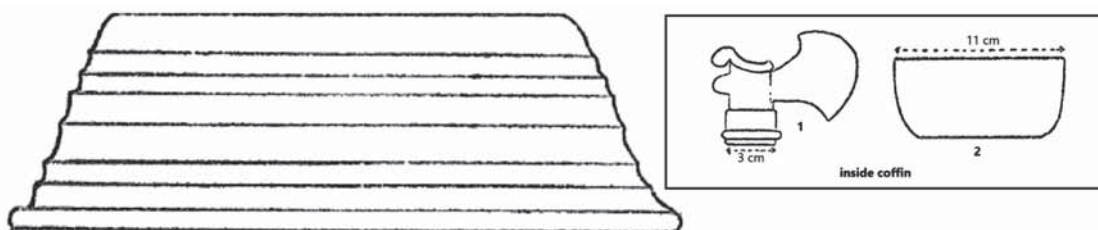
10. a copper vessel (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 66.29, see also Tallon 1987a: 199, variant A 1 a, early second millennium with comparisons at Ur)
11. ***a bitumen vessel with a 5 cm deep hollow, decorated with ram protomes on each side (h. 10 cm) (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 83.3, National Museum of Iran inv. T 510); Connan & Deschesne (1996: 262, fig. 56) date this vessel to the early second millennium

Dating notes: broad copper plate and bitumen vessel support an early second millennium date.

Additional comments: *Tallon does not include any grave goods inside the coffin, listing all on the outside; **Tallon lists a silver bracelet instead of a copper one; ***the bitumen vessel was not in the field notes, it was perhaps incorrectly assigned in Mecquenem 1943, since, according to his field notes this burial (B 69) was excavated in 1936, yet the vessel was already recorded in his 1935 annual report with an accompanying image [pl. 025, top]

Original publication: Mecquenem 1943: 111-112, field notebook 147.3.1936

Additional references: Tallon 1987a: 85



C5. Susa, Donjon (south side)

Context: burial B 86; level recorded as - 7 m (burial not illustrated)

Details: coffin with multiple mouldings (type Mecquenem 1943, fig 64.4 [without pavement]); oriented West-East, body laid on right side.

inside coffin:

1. an axe (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 66.7, variant B 3 b)
2. a copper bowl (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 66.14)

outside coffin:

3. a terracotta vessel

Dating notes: ceramics not recorded and the single metal vessel is not closely datable

Additional comments: -

Original publication: Mecquenem 1943: 113, no field notebook entry

Additional references: Tallon 1987a: 85



C6. Susa, Donjon (south side)

Context: burial B 122; level recorded as around -7.24 (burial not illustrated)

Details: coffin with three mouldings (type Mecquenem 1943, fig 64.3, additional mouldings not shown); orientation not provided.

inside coffin:

1. 3 copper finger rings
2. a copper axe (Mecquenem 1943 fig. 66.7, variant B 3 b)

outside coffin:

3. an "Isin-Larsa incised grey-ware" vessel with four lugs (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 82.1)*

Dating notes: early second millennium based on grey-ware vessel (if correctly assigned to this burial)

Additional comments: *Tallon believes the reference to fig. 82.1 is incorrect as the vessel has only two lugs; therefore it could depict a similar vessel in another burial recorded in the 1936 field notebook (see C7 below)

Original publication: Mecquenem 1943: 114, excavated 1936, no field notebook entry

Additional references: Tallon 1987a: 85

C7. Susa, Donjon (area not known)

Context: burial not numbered; level not recorded (burial not illustrated)

Details: coffin with three mouldings; no further detail provided

inside coffin:

1. 3 finger rings
2. an axe (variant B 3 b)

outside coffin:

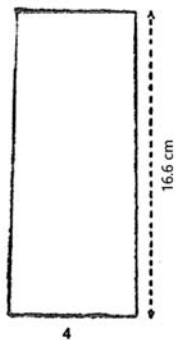
3. an incised vessel with 4 lugs

Dating notes: early second millennium based on grey-ware vessel (if correctly assigned to this burial)

Additional comments: Tallon reassigned the C6 incised vessel (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 82.1) to this burial

Original publication: field notebook entry 17.3.1936

Additional references: Tallon 1987a: 86

C8. Susa, Donjon (south side)**Context:** burial B 80; level recorded as -7.9 / -7 m (burial not illustrated)**Details:** coffin with multiple mouldings; orientation not provided; skeleton not preserved inside coffin:

1. a copper finger ring
2. a copper axe (details of axe unknown; Tallon assigns it to variant B 3 despite admitting a lack of knowledge of its form)
3. a copper dagger
4. a cylindrical copper vessel (Mecquenem 1943, fig. 66.25, undecorated; Tallon 1987a: 208, vessel variant B 2 b dating from ca. mid-third millennium to the Sukkalmah period)
5. a silver diadem* (cf. diadems in Tallon 1987b, nos. 1176-1185)
6. a silver bracelet
7. a needle

Dating notes: no ceramics, metal vessel not closely dateable; precious sheet metal diadems typical of early second millennium wealthy burials (see Tallon 1987a: 64)**Additional comments:** In Mecquenem 1943 the grave good locations were not stated, but according to his field notes all were inside the coffin; *field notes give “sheets of gold and silver” instead of a silver diadem**Original publication:** Mecquenem 1943: 112, field notebook entry 24.2.1935**Additional references:** Tallon 1987a: 86**C9. Susa, Donjon (area not known)****Context:** burial not numbered; level recorded as -7.6 (burial not illustrated)**Details:** pit burial of a child

assemblage:

1. an axe (variant B 3 b)
2. silver earrings
3. a finger ring
4. a bracelet
5. 2 pins

Dating notes: no ceramics or additional dating evidence.**Additional comments:** -**Original publication:** field notebook entry 9.2.1935**Additional references:** Tallon 1987a: 86**C10. Susa, Donjon (area not known)****Context:** burial not numbered; level recorded as -6.5 (burial not illustrated)**Details:** coffin with one moulding; orientation not provided

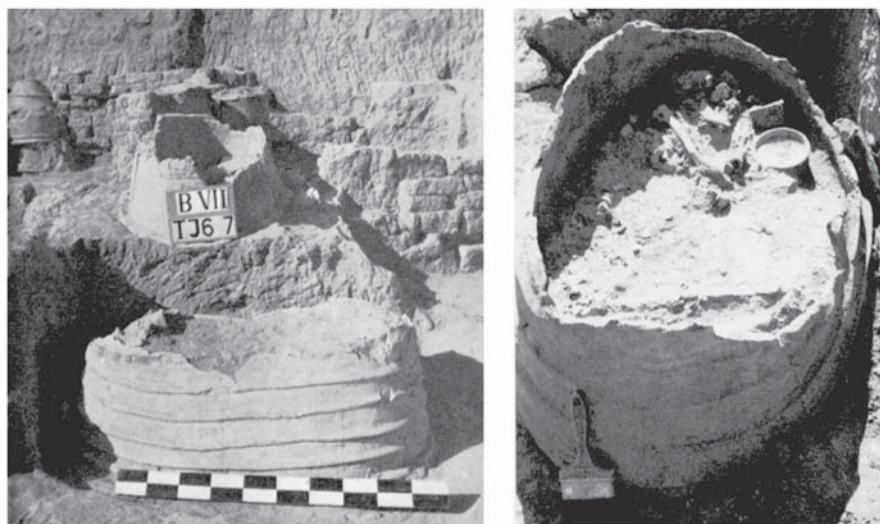
inside coffin:

1. a copper bowl
2. a ring-handle
3. fragment of a bracelet
4. sheet of silver
5. 2 finger rings

outside coffin (specified as “under”):

6. an axe (variant B 3 b) (Deshayes 1960, no. 1401; Tallon 1987, no. 58, Louvre Museum Sb 6815)
7. a bracelet
8. a copper bottle (15 cm)

Dating notes: no ceramics or additional dating evidence.**Additional comments:** -**Original publication:** axe shown in Mecquenem 1934a, pl. 11, burial probably belonged to a group of ribbed “Ur III” coffins in the Donjon between -5.6 and -7.7 m mentioned on p. 5; field notebook entry 16.3.1934**Additional references:** Deshayes 1960, pl. XXI: 12, no.1401; Tallon 1987a: 86; 1987b, no. 58



C11. Susa, Ville Royale chantier B, locus 25

Context: burial T.J.7; level B VII, cut from level B VI; pit cut into a street near a house entry

Details: coffin (h. 42 cm, l. 125 cm, w. 80 cm) with four applied mouldings and applied lip; oriented South-North, head to the south, face looking to the west; body laid on left side with legs tightly flexed, arms flexed, hands in front of the face

inside coffin:

1. an open form bracelet made from rolled silver sheet on the left wrist
2. an open copper/bronze ring with touching ends (Louvre Sb 13763b; Tallon 1987b: 108, 310, no. 1117) worn on the ring-finger of the right hand
3. an open copper/bronze ring with flat profile worn with previous on the ring-finger of the right hand
4. a copper bowl in hands (h. 7.1 cm, Louvre Sb 13760; Tallon 1987a: 202; 1987b: 74, 268, no. 731)
5. a terracotta bowl with traces of burning on the interior (h. 5cm; cf. Gasche 1973, group 6c, pl. 7: 23); at forearm level
6. an axe (h. 10.9 cm, variant B 3 b) at forearm level with traces of the wooden handle inside the shaft
7. a copper/bronze dagger near the elbow (l. 21.4 cm with large blade, angular shoulder characterised by a projection, V-shape ribs in relief on both faces, straight rectangular-section tang with two rivet holes (subtype A 3 d' in Tallon 1987a: 121-122, Tallon considers this a specifically Susian dagger)
8. a copper/copper alloy bowl (h. 8.6 cm, diam. 17.5 cm; sub-type C 2 in Tallon 1987a: 209-10); placed near the knees under the coffin rim which cut it almost in half

outside coffin:

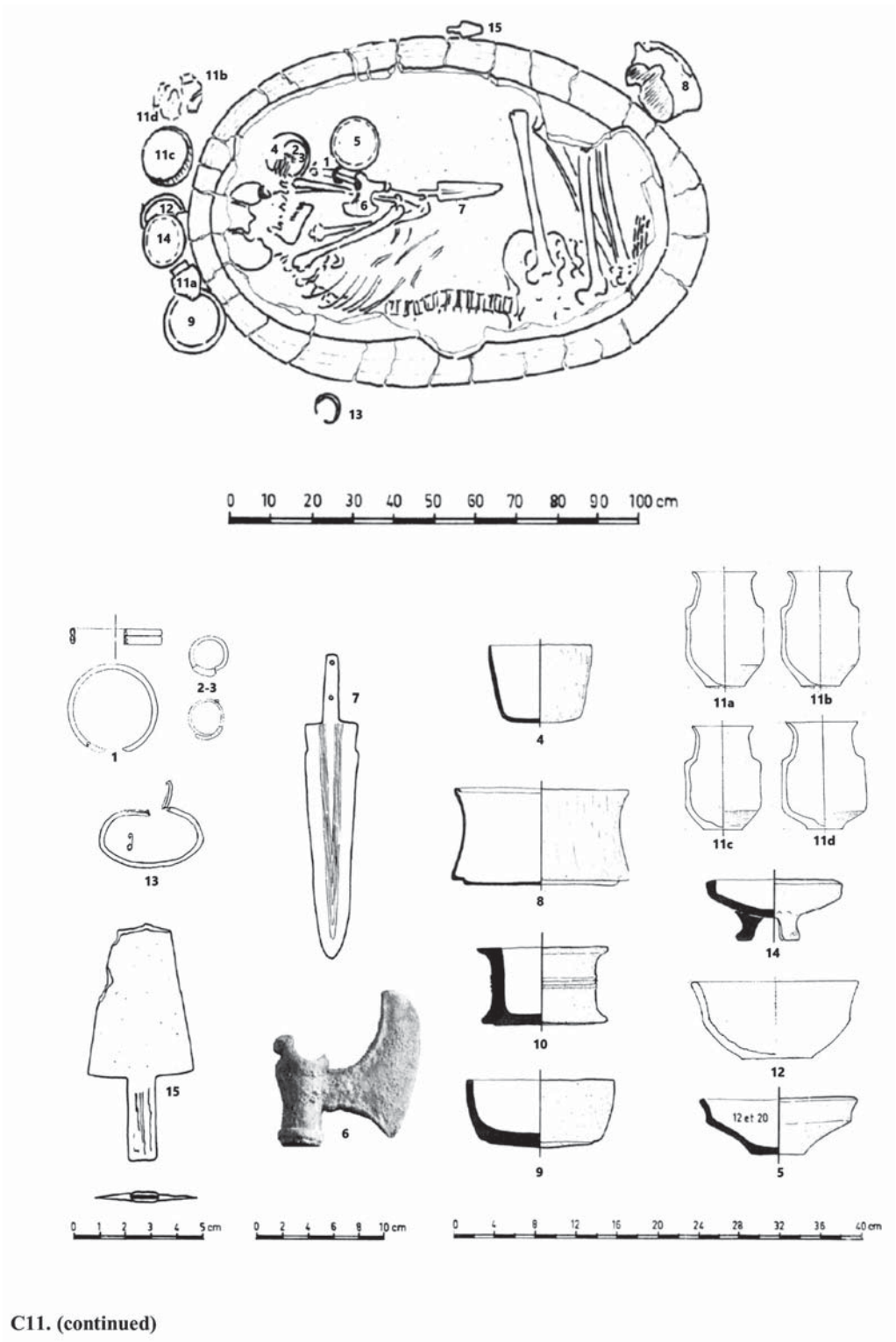
9. a bitumen mastic bowl with ashy material inside (h. 6.1 cm, lip diam. 14.6 cm; see Ghirshman 1968, fig. 16, right, and possibly Connan & Deschesne 1996, fig. 191)
10. a horizontally ribbed cylindrical bitumen mastic vessel with ashy material inside (h. 7.1 cm, lip diam. 13.1 cm; Connan & Deschesne 1996: 247, fig. 206, Sb 7282; Ghirshman 1968, fig. 16, left)
11. 4 vessels (h. range 10 cm-11.2 cm; cf. Gasche 1973, pl. 25: 14, 17 group 21a, VR B VI)
12. a bowl (h. 6.2 cm; group 3b in Gasche 1973 pl. 3; note that Tallon assigns it instead to Gasche's group 6)
13. a bracelet of the same type as the one worn on the body but smaller (internal diam. 4.6 cm, too small to be worn by a man; belonged to a woman or child?)
14. a small tripod bowl in ceramic with legs modelled and applied (h. 5.5 cm; Gasche [2000: 211] suggests that this object was probably imported; similar bowls were found in Luristan by the Holmes expedition [Schmidt et al. 1989, pl. 93], one with an axe of subtype B 3 b in Chigha Sabz burial M7, x2 [see here C19])
15. a bronze arrowhead (l. 8.7 cm, w. 4.1 cm, thickness 0.5 cm; Sb 10852; no. 265, subtype A 2 in Tallon 1987a: 149; 1987b: 35, 189)

Dating notes: Gasche (1973: 13) initially dated the burial to B V, but reassigned it to B VI (Gasche 2000: 209); the ceramics support this redating

Additional comments: interment assigned a male gender by Gasche (2000: 209) based on grave goods

Original publication: Ghirshman 1968: 7-8, fig. 15*bis*, coffin shown in situ in fig. 15a-b, and selected contents shown in figs. 16-17; burial T.S.179 in Gasche 2000: 209-212, Pls. 104-106

Additional references: Tallon 1987a: 87



C12. Susa, Ville Royale chantier 1

Context: burial not numbered; level recorded as cote 6.5; found around the ruins of a late third/early second millennium BCE temple with a series of burials in coffins with both moulded and unmoulded walls (burial not illustrated)

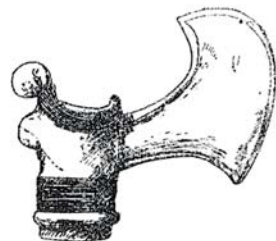
Details: coffin (type unknown); axe type B 3 b (inside coffin?)

Dating notes: ceramics and other small finds not recorded, but the stratigraphic position suggests early second millennium BCE

Additional comments: -

Original publication: Mecquenem 1943: 53-56, fig. 47.5

Additional references: -

**C13. Susa, Exterior east wall of the Apadana palace (possibly below the wall foundations)**

Context: burial not numbered; level recorded as “at 5 m depth” (burial not illustrated, but coffin and grave goods outside it photographed in situ)

Details: coffin (base 118 x 55 cm) with three mouldings; orientation not provided; body laid on right side, limbs flexed

inside coffin:

1. earrings (worn on body)
2. 2 bracelets, one of which is silver (worn on body)

outside coffin:

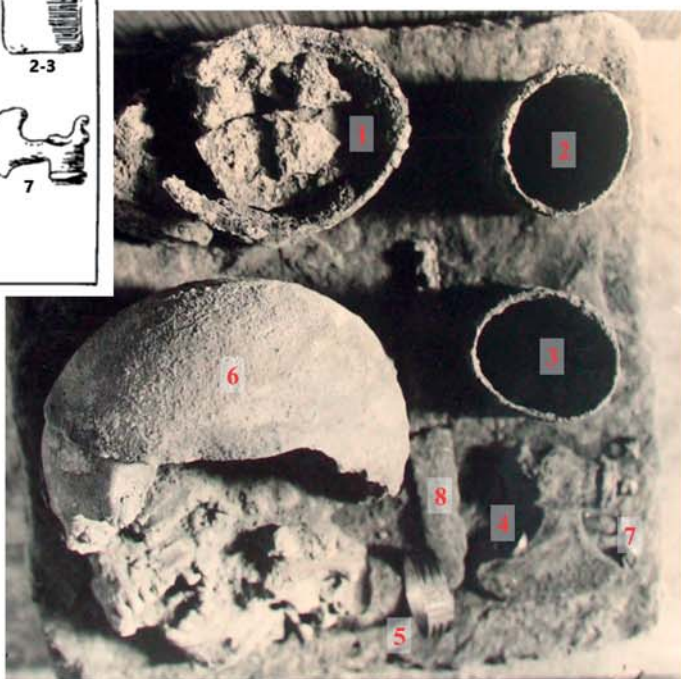
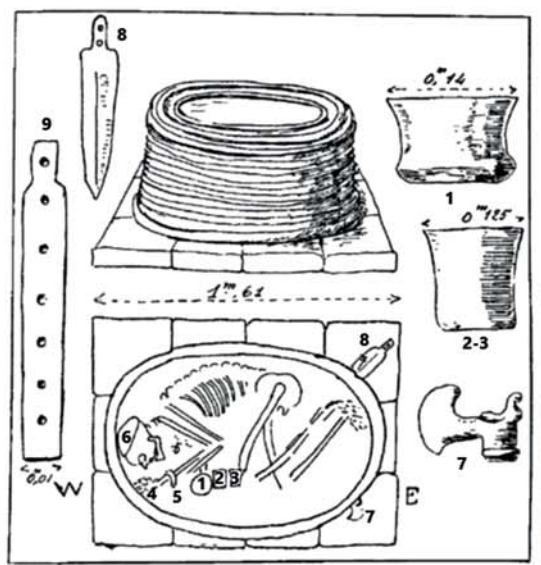
3. an axe “near the head” (variant difficult to discern; Tallon tentatively suggests B 3 a)
4. 7 triangular arrowheads at head end
5. 1 large copper/bronze vessel of indistinguishable type at head end; the form appears to be close to Tallon 1987a: 203, variant A 4 b typically found in early second millennium coffins, however, it is substantially larger than this variant which ranges 4.7-6.5 cm in height
6. 2 vessels with red-painted necks at head end (cf. typical VR B V/VI forms in Gasche 1973, pl. 25, e.g. nos. 12 [B V], nos. 14, 20 [B VI])
7. 2 larger vessels, one of which is visible at the foot end of the coffin (form unclear)

Dating notes: typical VR B V/VI forms give a Shimashki/early Sukkalmah date

Additional comments: -

Original publication: a description of the burial and an image of the coffin exterior prior to excavation of its contents appears in Mecquenem 1926: 5, fig. 007 (bottom left); no field notebook entry.

Additional references: Tallon 1987a: 87, fig. 4 (Tallon does not give an excavation year or location for this example and does not refer to the details of the burial provided in the annual reports)



C14. Susa, Apadana, under the east court of the Achaemenid palace

Context: burial not numbered; level not recorded

Details: coffin (l. approx. 150 cm) with numerous mouldings, set above a pavement; oriented West-East (head to the West), face looking South; body laid on right side, legs tightly flexed, arms flexed hands at face level

inside coffin:

1. a copper vessel (diam. 14 cm) in front of torso, between forearms and flexed knees (Tallon 1987a: 209, vessel variant C 1 b)
2. a near-cylindrical copper vessel (diam. 12.5 cm) in front of torso, between forearms and flexed knees (Tallon 1987a: 211, vessel variant C 3 b)
3. as per no. 2
4. a gold finger ring (Tallon 1987b, no. 1119)
5. a gold bracelet (Tallon 1987b, no. 1097)
6. a silver “cap” on the skull (Tallon 1987b, no. 1186)

outside coffin:

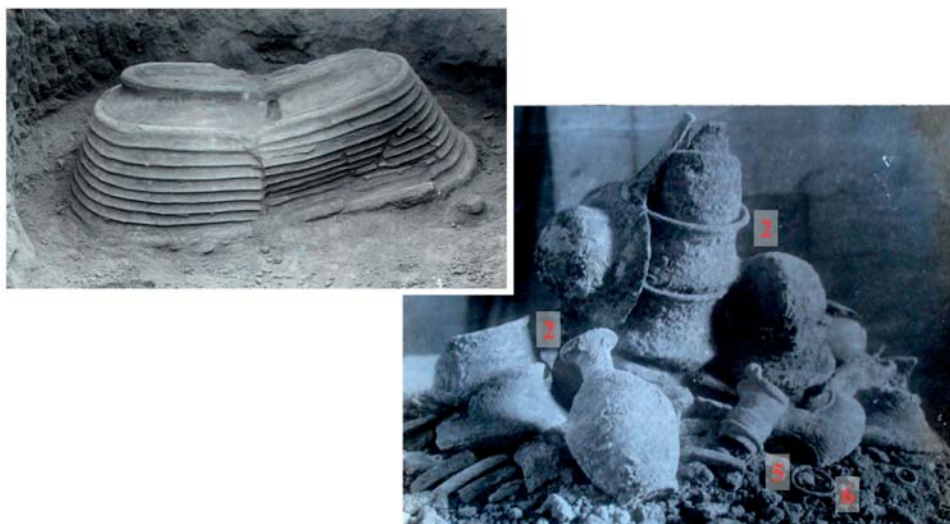
7. an axe (variant B 3 a or b) resting against the foot end of the coffin
8. a dagger at the foot end of the coffin (appears to be partly underneath the coffin rim)
9. a pierced ivory plaque

Dating notes: ceramics lacking, but the metal vessels are found in other early second millennium burials.

Additional comments: Tallon acknowledges that the subtype sketched by Mecquenem is B 3 b, but states that a photo of the find suggests it is B 3 a (see photo of the skull and grave goods reproduced here). In her catalogue Tallon (1987b: 110) also attributes four gold earrings (nos. 1133-36) to the burial, but does not include them in her description of the burial (Tallon 1987a, table 3)

Original publication: Mecquenem 1924a: 2-3, pl. 5 (brief description of burial and photo of skull and grave goods); more detail in Mecquenem 1943-44: 137-38, pl. 3 (line drawing of burial); no field notebook entry

Additional references: Tallon 1987a: 87, 279, fig. 36 (includes an incorrect reference to Mecquenem 1924: 113)



C15. Susa, Apadana, under the central court of the Achaemenid palace

Context: burial (“*tombeau*”) H; level recorded as 2-4 m depth (burial not illustrated, but coffin photographed in situ)

Details: coffin with seven fine applied mouldings, thick rim, and a distinct narrow foot; coffin contained two skeletons separated by a large piece of pottery; orientation not provided

inside coffin (below the pottery divider):

1. a silver skull-cap (cf. caps in C14 and a nearby coffin; see Tallon 1987a: 279, 1987b, nos. 1186-1187)
2. numerous bronze vessels (near skull); in a photograph of the assemblage, vessels at left and centre appear to be Tallon 1987a: 209-10 subtype C 2 known from other early second millennium coffins (cf. also GS 6784 in C11), the bottle (h. 14.7 cm) in the foreground is unique (Tallon 1987a: 220; 1987b, no. 787)
3. a mirror (near skull)

outside coffin:

4. a bronze axe with traces of wood belonging to the handle (photograph shows variant B 3 b)
5. a seamless bronze hoop
6. a small round terracotta vessel

Dating notes: burial situated at a level of ca. 1-3 m above a tomb incorporating bricks of Attahushu; the ensemble of metal vessels and skull-silver cap can be dated to the early second millennium

Additional comments: photo of assemblage shows a finger ring; fragments of “inscribed tablets” reported in Mecquenem (1922a: 6) in unclear relation to burial, elsewhere Mecquenem (1922b: 134) places them in the coffin

Original publication: Mecquenem 1922a: 6, pl. 11 no. 19, pl. 12 no. 21, location marked on plan in pl. 29); 1922 inventory report (year ID 217, inventory no. 607), which states that this “*belle hache en bronze fondu*” preserved traces of the wooden handle; Mecquenem 1922b: 134, fig. 12; no field notebook entry

Additional references: Tallon 1987a does not mention this burial, but in fig. 25 shows the above photograph of the metal grave goods

C16. Susa, Apadana (area not known)

Context: burial not numbered (burial not illustrated)

Details: coffin with mouldings; no further detail provided

assemblage (position in relation to coffin [i.e. inside or outside] not known for any of the objects)

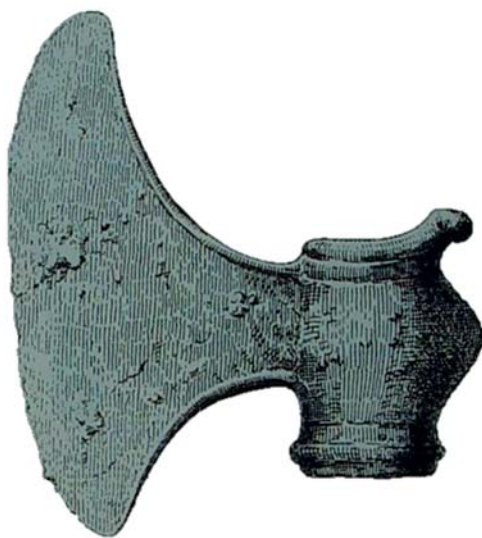
1. an axe (Tallon assigns this axe to variant B 3 c based on an unpublished sketch)
2. 3 triangular arrowheads
3. 2 pins
4. an open hoop
5. an earring or open finger ring
6. a bracelet that seems to have been made in gold or silver sheet

Dating notes: -

Additional comments: Tallon states that the assemblage is known from a drawing but may be incomplete

Original publication: -

Additional references: Tallon 1987a: 87

**C17. Susa, Acropole**

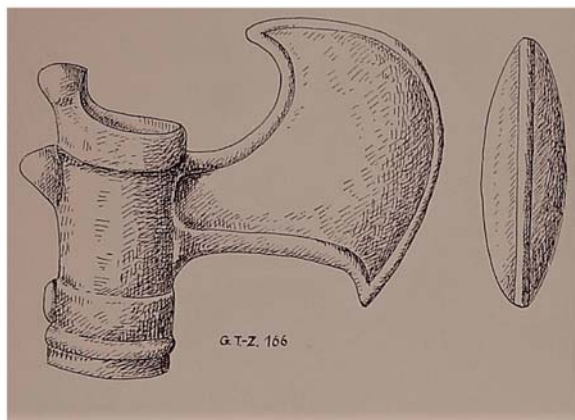
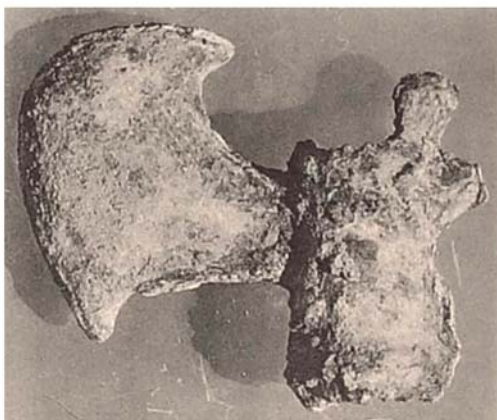
Context: unearthed in 1904 near a “hoard” or “foundation deposit” in trench 23 described as a 60 cm thick, ca. 1.2 x 1.5 m deposit of assorted artefacts from different periods lying 40 cm below the paving adjacent to the temple of Inshushinak

Dating notes: axe deposited as an heirloom (or a recently rediscovered object) in a deposit whose most recent objects date to the ca. 12th–11th century (see Álvarez-Mon 2020: 320)

Additional comments: axe l. 10.4 cm

Original publication: Mecquenem 1905: 81, fig. 184; for the hoard see Mecquenem 1905: 61

Additional references: Deshayes 1960, no. 1403; Tallon 1987a: 83-84; 1987b, no. 51, Louvre Museum Sb 2913

**C18. Chogha Zanbil,**

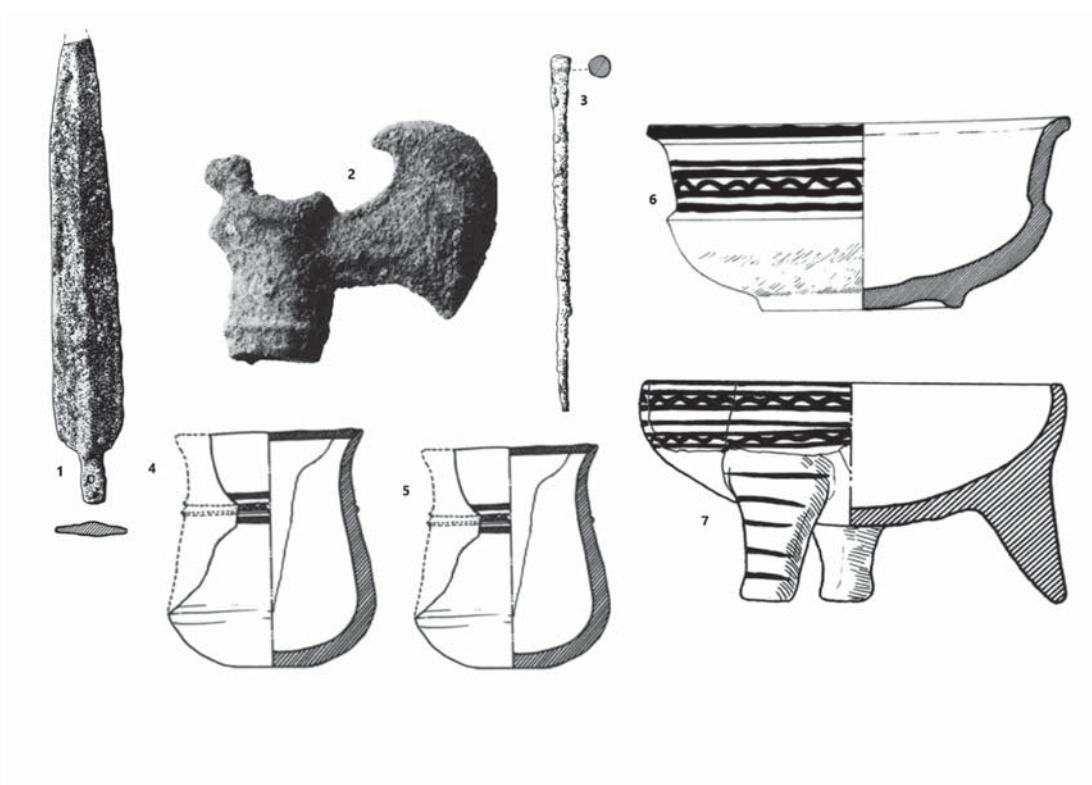
Context: Temple of Kiririsha East, antecella; found in a weapons deposit that lay 25 cm below a “bed” of approximately 100 mace-heads, many of which were inscribed with the name of the ca. late 14th century king Untash-Napirisha

Dating notes: axe deposited as an heirloom (or a recently rediscovered object) in a Middle Elamite context (ca. late 14th/13th century?)

Additional comments: -

Original publication: Ghirshman 1966: 100-101, pl. LIII: 5, LXXXIII GTZ 166

Additional references: Tallon 1987a: 83-84



C19. Chigha Sabz

Context: burial M7, x2, elevation –8.35 (burial not illustrated)

Details: earth burial without preserved bones

assemblage:

1. bronze dagger (lanceolate with midrib, l. 22.2 cm) (CS 129, University Museum, Philadelphia UM-43-25-234, Schmidt et al. 1989, Pl. 120c)
2. bronze axe (h. 9.1 cm) (CS 130, University Museum, Philadelphia UM-43-23-233, Schmidt et al. 1989, Pl. 125d)
3. bronze pin (l. 16.2 cm) (CS 131, National Museum of Iran, cf. Schmidt et al. 1989, Pl. 121i, reproduced here)
4. terracotta goblet (h. 9.3 cm) (CS 133, National Museum of Iran, cf. Schmidt et al. 1989, 94f, reproduced here to approximate scale of CS 133)
5. terracotta goblet (h. 8.7 cm) (CS 139, University Museum, Philadelphia UM-43-25-40, cf. Schmidt et al. 1989, 94f, reproduced here to approximate scale of CS 139)
6. terracotta ring-base bowl with carinated profile (h. 7.6 cm, diam. 18.6 cm) (CS 132, National Museum of Iran, Schmidt et al. 1989, Pl. 92s)
7. terracotta tripod vessel (h. 9.7 cm, diam. 18 cm) (CS 134, National Museum of Iran, Schmidt et al. 1989, Pl. 93k)

Dating comments: Giyan IVc-III /Middle Bronze Age I (2000-1800/1750 BCE) (following Gernez 2007: 146)

Additional comments: -

Original publication: Schmidt et al. 1989: 28, 182, 191, pl. 125d

Additional references: -

THE IRON AGE IN THE DARGAZ PLAIN (NORTHEAST KHORASAN). THE SITE OF KOHNE GHALE, A CASE STUDY

BY

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Abstract: In Iran, the Iron Age refers to the period between the beginnings of the mid-second millennium BC and the end of the first millennium BC. Investigations on the archaeological material of this period have been done in different parts of Iran. However, in the northeast of Iran and in the cultural zone of Greater Khorasan, the Iron Age remains largely unknown due to a lack of studies. In fact, the basic chronological sequence has not yet been defined. Despite this, it is clear that the neighbouring regions and cultures, such as Yaz and Dahistan, have influenced the material culture of Greater Khorasan.

In this research, the cultural materials of the site of Kohne Ghale were collected during a systematic survey; the samples were dated by a comparative-analytical approach. The pottery from Kohne Ghale resembles those from the Yaz culture of Central Asia. The Iron Age pottery industry of Kohne Ghale demonstrates both local and indigenous features and influences of ceramic traditions characteristic of sites in Turkmenistan (including Yaz Depe and Ulug Depe). Such influences are recognizable in the forms of containers and pot-building techniques. The influences also extend further to the west and south of Kohne Ghale, and are found especially in the Neyshabur Plain and the settlements related to the Yaz culture of the Atrek River.

Keywords: Dargaz Plain, Kohne Ghale, Iron Age, Yaz Culture

Introduction

In the field of Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, the Iron Age is an important cultural period during which man managed to take advantage of iron to make tools. Moreover, during this period the inhabitants of the Iranian Plateau transformed the biological, social and cultural patterns, leading to the generation of new artistic expressions. According to investigations, these developments continued until the rise of Achaemenids (c. 550 BC). Hypothetical arguments on the Iron Age are indebted to the

early work of Dyson who developed the theory of cultural dynamics in the Northwest of Iran (Dyson 1965) as well as to Young's theory of pottery horizons and immigration of Iranians (Young 1967).

In the middle of the second millennium BC, two distinctive cultural spheres, both Yaz and the Archaic Dahistan type, emerged in Khorasan (Vahdati 2018). A western one centred on Southwestern Turkmenistan and the Gorgan Plain, and an eastern one encompassing the regions from central Atrek to Bactria, the Upper Atrek Valley, and apparently other regions in eastern Khorasan. The material cultures of these two spheres took different paths during the following era of the Iron Age. The one on the west was represented by the material culture recovered from the site of Dahistan in the Mashhad-Mesrian Plain. The one on the east, called the Yaz culture, was named after the site of Yaz Tepe in the Merv Oasis in Southern Turkmenistan (Masson 1986: 312). The sequence of Yaz Tepe is divided into three periods: I, II, III. The first phase, Yaz I, is featured by rural settlements, dispersed on vast plains and often equipped with small fortified citadels constructed on adobe platforms, and by hand-made pottery, especially large jars (Sagdullaev 1978: 15) decorated with simple geometric motifs (Kohl 1984: 194). Yaz II is dated to 1100-700 and is characterized by wheel-made pottery and large fortified sites (Kuzmina 2007). The Late Iron Age Yaz III is dated to 700-400 BC as a part of the Achaemenid Empire and is very close to the previous period (Bendezu-Sarmiento & Lhuillier 2013). The Dahistan culture in the west was first defined in 1939 by Marushchenko. It was initially dated to the end of the second millennium and the beginning of the first millennium BC, based on the similar material culture from sites in northern Iran. Geographically, the Dahistan settlements developed in the lower Atrek River region, the Mashhad-Mesrian Plain and the northern Gorgan Plain on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea (Lecomte 2005: 461). It has been proposed that the Dahistan culture ended with the Achaemenid conquest of the region, but there is no sufficient evidence to prove this hypothesis (Masson 1959: 108). The typical sites of the Dahistan culture are not in the form of high mounds with a long sequence of ancient deposits. Rather, it composes of a central fortified settlement with a large-scale irrigation network, often in rectangular shape, and a series of small sites surrounding it (Lecomte 2005; Kohl 1984: 205). The material remains of the Dahistan culture were surprisingly homogeneous throughout the sequence, with as typical feature the gray-coloured wheel-made pottery (Masson 1956: 240).

Greater Khorasan, located between Central Asia and the Iranian plateau, is key to study the cultures of the second and first millennium BC both in Iran and in the neighbouring regions (Basafa 2012: 15). These include, for example, the problems of the spread of the Yaz and Dahistan cultures and the gray ware pottery (Basafa 2017: 3). Within Khorasan, the Dargaz Plain is especially important for understanding the developments of the second and first half of the first millennium BC (Fig. 1). The plain is located in the northeast of Iran and borders with Turkmenistan. Among the sites on the Dargaz Plain, Kohne Ghale is among the most important ones. It can offer important insights into the cultural development and transformations



Fig. 1. Geographic location of Dargaz on the map of Iran (source: authors).

during the Iron Age. This paper provides a systematic review of Kohne Ghale. It will demonstrate that the pottery belongs to the Iron Age ceramic tradition, or to the Yaz culture tradition of Central Asia.

Research Background

Studies on the Yaz culture in Central Asia and the Dargaz Plain in Iran can be summarized as follows. Studies in the 1950s show that these sites are related to an eastern cultural sphere, with features typical of the Iron Age in Central Asia (Masson 1959). Even though by now more than 50 years have passed by, archaeologists have never recognized this significant cultural period. During the first archaeological investigations of Khorasan, carried out in the Eastern Atrek Zone by the Institute of Archaeology of the University of Turin in 1976, Iron Age materials, that are consistent with the Yaz culture, have been documented (Venco Ricciardi 1980: 58-59; Kohl, Biscione & Ingraham 1982: 10). Archaeologists, however, did not start to be aware of the existence of the Iron Age material culture until the Excavation of Jiran Tepe (Esfarayen), which is located in the central part of Khorasan, in 2012. The excavations at Jiran Tepe yielded material remains belonging to both the Yaz and Dahistan cultures (Vahdati 2016).

Accordingly, the material components of the Yaz culture should be looked for in the central plains of Khorasan. A few investigations were concerned with the Yaz culture, including the survey of the Roshtkhar Plain identifying 13 sites related to Yaz (Rezaei, Zanganeh Ebrahimi & Basafa 2019: 7) and the excavations of the Se Tepe site of Neyshabur from 2016 to 2018 (Basafa & Rezaei 2018). Surveys of the past few years have identified five sites across the Dargaz plain that show ties with the Yaz cultural sphere. These sites are Tepe Lik, Tepe Sahebjan, Tepe Nazar, Yarim Tepe and Kohne Ghale (Zoshk & Baghizadeh 2013: 15). The present research focuses on Kohne Ghale, using this site as a case study for understanding Iron Age culture in eastern Iran.

The Site of Kohne Ghale

The site of Kohne Ghale is located in the Dargaz Plain in Northeastern Khorasan. The Dargaz Plain, situated in the Hezar Masjed Mountains along Sangsurakh village up to the border town of Lotfabad, constitutes an

independent geographic unit between 37.11-37.33 northern latitude and 38.58-59.11 eastern longitude (Afsharharb 1994: 11). Kohne Ghale (37° 30' 30" in latitude and 59° 16' 54" in longitude) is located on a natural mound between the main branch of the Darungar River and the Kalshour Sedaghat River, with an elevation of 301 m above sea level (Fig. 2). The settlement measures, from the surrounding plain to the highest point of the site, 18 meters in height. It occupies a surface area of ca. 3 hectares. The settlement consists of a number of mounds, which are ruins of structures of roughly the same period. The site is flanked by the Darungar River on the east and southeast, the village of Mirqalah on the north, and an asphalt road that connects Dargaz and Lotfabad on the west and southwest (Fig. 3).

Research method

The goal of this research is to conduct an analysis of the surface material from Kohne Ghale. The basis for the study is a systematic survey

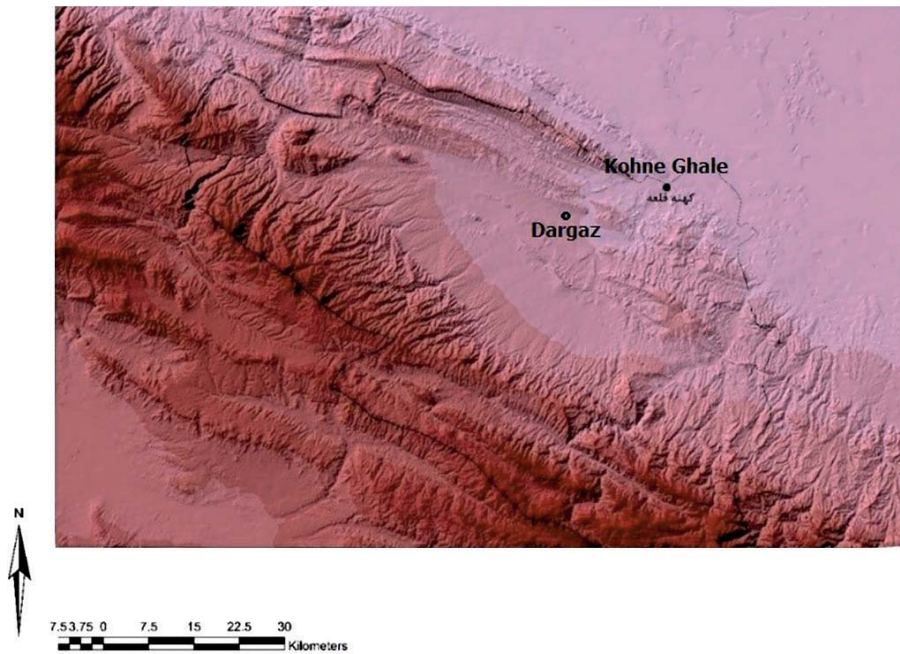


Fig. 2: Location of Kohne Ghale on a contour map of Dargaz County (sources: authors).



Fig. 3: View of Kohne Ghale site from different directions (sources: authors).

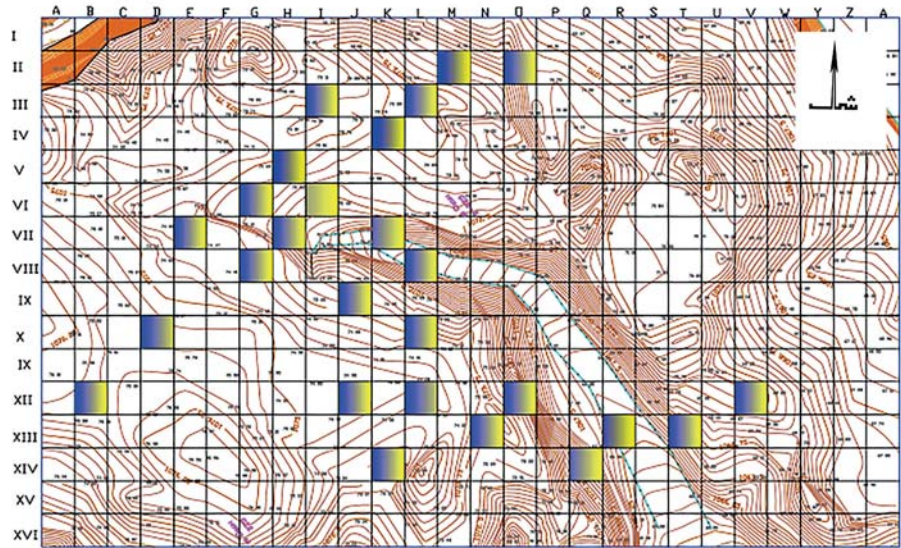


Fig. 4. Sampling situations and topographic gridding of Kohne Ghale (sources: authors).

conducted in 2018. During the survey, we first divided the site into grids, and then gathered the materials in each grid. We divided the surface of the entire mound into 10×10 squares. Then we drew the topography map of the site and collected the material remains on the surface. After that, we documented the typical samples based on their frequency of presence and varieties. Finally, we did a comparative study of the material and drew a typology chart (Fig. 4).

Analysis of material culture of Kohne Ghale

The study of the material culture of Kohne Ghale, mainly pottery sherds, demonstrates close ties between the site and those of Central Asia, where the ceramic sequence of the Iron Age is labelled respectively as Yaz I, II and III.

Yaz I Culture

Yaz I refers to the early Iron Age culture of southern Central Asia. At the end of the Bronze Age, a new cultural horizon emerged in southern Turkmenistan. This new cultural horizon, known as Yaz I, is derived from its name-site, Yaz Tepe in the Merv Oasis. Material similar to that from the lower levels at Yaz Tepe has been recovered from many sites in southern Central Asia, such as East Atak and Ulug Depe. The latter is a unique site in the Kopet Dag and has a long sequence from the Neolithic period to the Achaemenid Empire. It allows us to document the transition from the Bronze to the Iron Ages (Bendezu-Sarmiento & Lhuillier 2011; Sarianidi 1971).

The Yaz I ceramic is featured by hand-made painted pottery with geometric paintings, often of diamonds and triangles on red and buff ware (Boucharlat, Francfort & Lecomte 2005: 488). Masson and Sarianidi believe that the Yaz I pottery is a sedentary interpretation and adaptation of the Steppe pottery technique, but it is more sophisticated than the hand-made pottery of the Steppe (Masson & Sarianidi 1972: 141). In addition, some of the Late Bronze traditions such as the production of polished handmade gray pottery persisted with some modifications during this period, and the continuity of the tradition can be observed on pottery of Ulug Depe (Cattani & Genito 1998: 76). The period of Yaz I seems to have witnessed the decline of urban sites and the rise of rural sites. Such

a phenomenon is also observed in the southern and western parts of Khorasan. The absolute date for the Yaz I culture is contemporary with the Early Iron Age (1400-900 BC).

Examination of pottery from Kohne Ghale demonstrates that the ceramics from the site share all the main features of the Yaz I pottery, such as the buff colour, outward projecting angled edges, straw and other additive material, stripes under the edge with straight, vertical and/or diagonal and wavy lines (Cattani & Genito 1998: 80). The most important feature of this type of pottery is that it is handmade and has a coarse-grained chamot, including coarse gravel and pottery pieces that had been baked in low temperature (Shepard 1980: 104). The samples documented in Kohne Ghale are comparable to those of the Yaz culture. The Kohne Ghale pottery is mostly buff, red and gray. The surface decoration of the ceramics from Kohne Ghale includes mainly geometric designs. The most frequently seen patterns, which are usually in reddish colour painted on buff ware, are stripes arranged horizontally in the upper part of the recipients (Fig. 5).

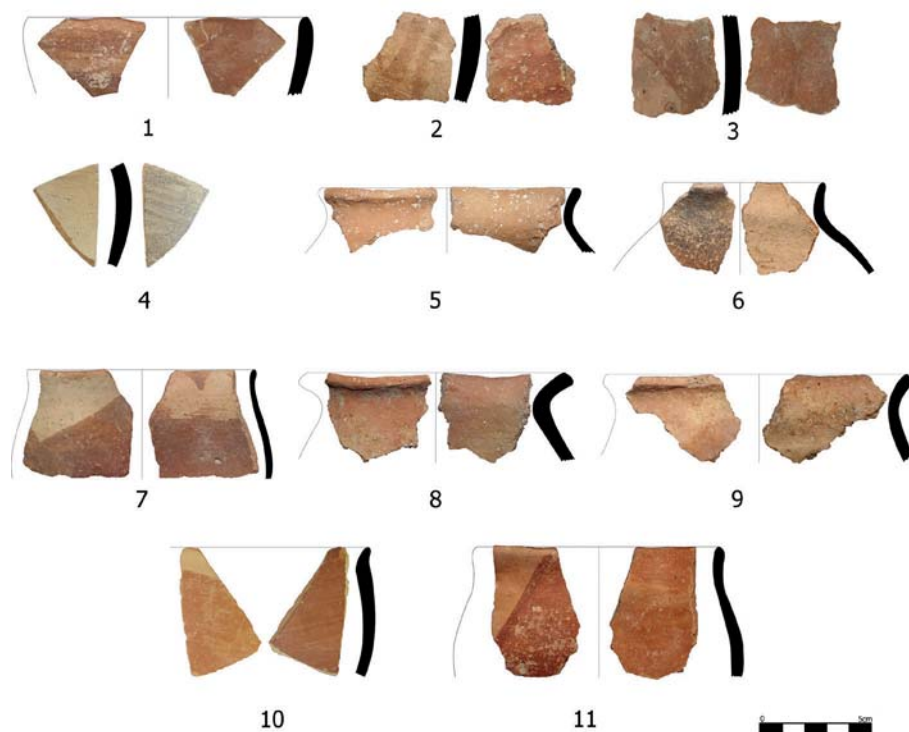


Fig. 5. Samples of pottery from the Yaz I culture.

Other designs include zigzag patterns in dark brown colour painted on a buff background (Fig. 5.2) and various geometric patterns (Fig. 5). Morphologically, the containers consist mainly of jars with open mouths and round (Fig. 5.6-8-9) or S-shaped lips (Fig. 5.7-10-11). The similarities between the samples from Kohne Ghale and those from sites of the Yaz I Cultures demonstrate a close cultural link between the Merv Oasis in southern Turkmenistan and Khorasan (Kohl, Biscione & Ingraham 1982: 10; Lhuillier & Rapin 2013).

The Yaz II and III Cultures in southern Central Asia

After the Yaz I period, around the end of the second millennium BC and the beginning of the first millennium BC, the ceramic assemblage in southern Central Asia changed drastically. Painted pottery of the Yaz I period

Table 1. Catalogue of Fig. 5

Row	Type of piece	Texture	Matrix colour	Outer surface colour	Inner surface colour	Production technique	Blending	Temper	Source of comparison
1	Edge	Coarse	Red	Red/Brown	Red	Wheel made	Adequate	Mineral	Lhuillier & Rapin 2013: 94
2	Body	Coarse	Red	Buff/Red	Brown	Handmade	Adequate	Mineral	Lhuillier & Rapin 2013: 101
3	Body	Coarse	Red	Brown/Red	Red	Handmade	Adequate	Mineral	Lhuillier & Rapin 2013: 101
4	Body	Medium	Buff	Buff/Black	Buff	Wheel made	Adequate	Mineral	Lhuillier & Rapin 2013: 101
5	Edge	Coarse	Buff	Buff	Buff	Handmade	Inadequate	Mineral	Lhuillier & Rapin 2013: 101
6	Edge	Coarse	Gray	Black	Gray	Handmade	Inadequate	Mineral	Basafa 2017: 8
7	Edge	Medium	Red	Buff/Red	Buff/Red	Handmade	Adequate	Mineral	Bendezu-Sarmiento & Lhuillier 2011: 124
8	Edge	Medium	Red	Red	Red	Wheel made	Adequate	Sand	Basafa 2017: 8
9	Edge	Coarse	Red	Red	Red	Handmade	Inadequate	Mineral	Lhuillier & Rapin 2013: 101
10	Edge	Medium	Buff	Buff/Red	Red	Wheel made	Adequate	Mineral	Bendezu-Sarmiento & Lhuillier 2011: 124
11	Edge	Coarse	Red	Red/Buff	Red	Handmade	Adequate	Mineral	Bendezu-Sarmiento & Lhuillier 2011: 124

disappeared. Handmade pottery is still present but appears much less frequently. At Yaz Tepe, handmade pottery pieces gradually decreased and wheel-made ceramics increased significantly (Kohl 1984: 197). In fact, most of the pottery of the Yaz II and III periods is wheel made. The vessels, often containers with edges protruding outward, have red, red-orange to orange-brown surfaces (Venco Ricciardi 1980: 61-31; Fig. 6.1-2). The Yaz III pottery continues the Yaz II tradition so closely that it is difficult to really distinguish the ceramics of these two periods (Boucharlat, Francfort & Lecomte 2005: 489). Archaeologists studying the Central Asian Iron Age have used several typologies jointly to describe and categorize the Yaz II/III material. They have pointed out that, in order to accurately identify the period that the ceramics belong to, one must pay close attention to the stratigraphy of the pottery recovered (Lhuillier *et al.* 2013). Among the Yaz II/III material from the Central Asian sites, that from Ulug Depe has been thoroughly studied. While the Yaz II material has been dated to the first half of the first millennium BC, the Yaz III horizon has been associated with the Achaemenid period (Cattani & Genito 1998: 76). The most important feature of the Yaz III ceramics, compared to that of

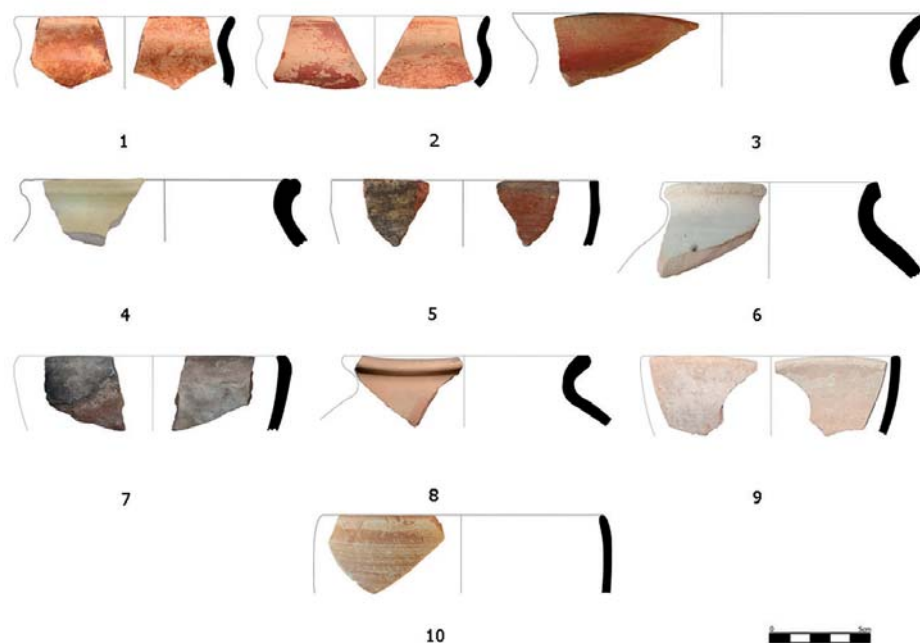


Fig. 6. Samples of Yaz II, III pottery designs.

the Yaz II material, seems to be the high quality and diverse forms of the ceramics, though this is not entirely sure. The pottery forms of Yaz II and III pottery are very similar to the boat- and tulip-shaped typical Achaemenid pottery. The forms and production techniques of the ceramic from Kohne Ghale are comparable to those from Central Asian sites. The samples from Kohne Ghale mainly consist of coarse storage jars or vats with outward projecting or simple edges (Fig. 6.6-7-8-9). They are similar to the ceramics from Ulug Depe (Lhuillier *et al.* 2013) and from sites in northern Khorasan and the Neyshabur Plain (Basafa 2017).

Discussion

The ceramic assemblages from the Kohne Ghale settlement have been studied in a context that includes both Khorasan and Central Asia. At Kohne Ghale, the pottery contains coarse and medium ware. The adhesive material or temper include mineral, plant, and a few combined forms. A majority of pottery from Kohne Ghale is handmade. Most of the samples

Table 2. Catalogue of Fig. 6

Row	Type of piece	Elegance	Matrix colour	Outside colour	Inside colour	Production technique	Blend	Temper	Source of comparison
1	Edge	Medium	Brown	Buff/Brown	Buff/Red	Wheel made	Adequate	Mineral	Masson 1959: 145
2	Edge	Medium	Buff	Buff/ Red	Buff/Red	Handmade	Inadequate	Mineral	Masson 1959: 145
3	Edge	Medium	Red	Red	Buff	Handmade	Adequate	Mineral	Lhuillier <i>et al.</i> 2013: 18
4	Edge	Medium	Gray	Buff	Buff	Wheel made	Adequate	Mineral	Lhuillier <i>et al.</i> 2013: 15 Masson 1963: 123
5	Edge	Coarse	Red	Brown	Red	Handmade	Inadequate	Mineral	Lhuillier <i>et al.</i> 2013: 16
6	Edge	Coarse	Buff	Buff	Buff	Wheel made	Adequate	Mineral	Lhuillier & Rapin 2013: 103
7	Edge	Coarse	Gray	Gray	Gray	Wheel made	Adequate	Mineral	Lhuillier <i>et al.</i> 2013: 18
8	Edge	Medium	Buff	Buff	Buff	Wheel made	Adequate	Mineral	Lhuillier & Rapin 2013: 106
9	Edge	Coarse	Buff	Buff	Buff	Wheel made	Adequate	Mineral	Basafa 2017: 9
10	Edge	Medium	Buff	Buff/Brown	Buff	Wheel made	Adequate	Mineral	Lhuillier & Rapin 2013: 106

have been adequately fired; only a few pottery pieces show inadequate or defective firing. Although the ceramic samples from Kohne Ghale do not contain any complete forms, many of the forms of the ceramics can be reconstructed. They can be divided into two groups, including ceramics of 1. Early Iron Age Culture, or the Yaz I Culture; 2. Middle and Late Iron Age, or the Yaz II and III Cultures. These two periods cannot be decisively identified through isolated ceramic pieces due to the continuation of the Yaz II tradition into the Yaz III period and the overlap of pottery characteristics of these two periods.

The study of the material from Kohne Ghale and from Central Asia both demonstrates that toward the end of the Late Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age, the settlement and economic patterns of the ancient sites in Central Asia and Eastern Iran experienced major transformations. The sizes of sites from the previous period were reduced. Some sites were even abandoned. In the Dargaz Plain, the Iron Age sites developed along the rivers and fertile lands surrounding these rivers made the region a good place to settle. The material from Kohne Ghale suggests that the settlement is located on the route of trans-regional communication. The ceramic bears direct impact of the pottery traditions of southern Turkmenistan. The similarities between the ceramics of Kohne Ghale and those of Central Asia, as demonstrated by the pottery discovered at Yaz Depe and Ulug Depe (Bendezu-Sarmiento & Lhuillier 2011: 241-243), provide a foundation for studying the chronology and the cultural components of northeastern Iran, especially in regions like Khorasan, where the material culture of the Iron Age is barely known. At Kohne Ghale, we also identified Iron Age ceramics of local traditions. These ceramics are only recognizable by their production technique and morphology and can be generalized to western and southern regions, especially the Neyshabur Plain and the settlements related to the Yaz culture like Tighmohre Tepe (Basafa 2017), Se Tepe (Basafa & Rezaei 2016) and the sites identified in the Atrek zone, e.g. Jiran Tepe (Vahdati 2016). These sites represent the intra-regional association of this site with neighbouring areas. Moreover, studies conducted in the Dargaz Plain by various researchers, especially Kohl & Heskell (1980), Zoshk and Baghizadeh (2013), as well as our research, clearly demonstrate the inter-regional nature of Kohne Ghale and its links with other settlements, especially the Iron Age settlements, of the Dargaz Plain. These sites are mainly located on the edge of the Darungar River. Kohne Ghale, unlike the other Iron Age sites on the Dargaz Plain, occupies a strategic location between

existing mountain ranges. Situated on the passage leading from northeastern Iran to southern Turkmenistan, this settlement can be regarded as a cultural-economic site of the Central Asian Iron Age.

Conclusion

This research, drawn on the analysis of surface data obtained from our systematic sampling of the ceramics from Kohne Ghale in the Dargaz Plain, clarifies the interactions between northeastern Iran and southern Central Asia during the Iron Age. Studies have shown that at the end of the Bronze Age, both Iran and Central Asia experienced a period of cultural transformation. Cities became smaller and some of them were even abandoned, and the only residential areas included southern Turkmenistan and the foothills of the Kopet Dag Mountains. This is the case in the largest part of eastern Iran and southern Central Asia and has been accompanied by complete separation from traditions of previous cultures. In some parts, however, it has been the continuation of those cultures. Dargaz Plain was a place where these cultures continued. At Dargaz, there was a gradual shift of the material culture from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age. Because of the continuation of the early tradition, in some cases it is difficult to detect the difference between the pottery of the Bronze Age and that of the early Iron Age, except for some well-known types of pottery. Studying the pottery of this transitional period, with a consideration of both ceramic typology and technology, and a better description of Iron Age ceramics of Central Asia, will be important for understanding the regional or chronological changes of the material culture of this period. Our research makes it possible to study the trans-regional connections between northeast Iran and south Central Asia during the Iron Age and the influence of pottery traditions of southern Turkmenistan on sites in eastern Iran. Additionally, the communications of this site can be generalized to other areas, including the central parts of Khorasan. Fortunately, due to archaeological excavations in these sites, one can talk more confidently about the authenticity of these findings.

It should be stated that despite all problems and challenges associated with the systematic study of the ceramics from Kohne Ghale, our investigation is potentially key to solving ambiguities in cultural relations between Iron Age cultures in the Dargaz region and central parts of Khorasan, which of course can be better understood by more archaeological excavations.

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TILLE HÖYÜK LEVEL X: A ‘MEDIAN’ OR ACHAEMENID PERIOD CITADEL IN THE EUPHRATES VALLEY?

BY

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Abstract: This article discusses the architectural remains from Layer X of the important site of Tille Höyük, located in the Euphrates Valley, in modern-day Turkey. The architectural complex identified there is usually considered to belong to the Achaemenid period. In the paper the analysis of certain characteristics of the Tille X complex and considerations regarding the dating of this important phase are discussed; a pre-Achaemenid period date (first half of the 6th century BC) is proposed for the construction of the complex.

Keywords: Tille Höyük, Level X, Euphrates Valley, ‘Median’ period, Achaemenid period, architecture

This article considers certain aspects of the important site of Tille Höyük, in modern-day Turkey¹. The focus is on the remains from Level X, considered by S. Blaylock – who has published most of the levels attributed to the Iron Age that were investigated in the site – to belong to the Achaemenid period. The aim of this paper is to analyse certain characteristics of the Tille X complex and make some observations about the dating of this important phase. The site² is located in Adiyaman province, in the district of Kahta, sub-district of Akıncılar (Blaylock 2009: 8), about 50 km east of Adiyaman city, on the west bank of the River Euphrates, not far from the modern bridge across the river (Pl. 1). The site was strategically located close to a ford where, when the water was low, it was possible to cross the river (Summers 1998: 399). The modern village of Tille/Geldibuldu, known also as Hiniç, developed on the east, south and west sides

¹ I would like to thank Geoffrey D. Summers for the useful information regarding the site and especially Level X that he gave me in 2020. I am also grateful to Faezeh Dadfar for her help with the Iranian literature.

² Coordinates: 37°45'1.96"N 38°53'31.86"E; elevation: 450-480 m a.s.l.

of the hill on which the site stands (Moore 1993: 199). Mehmet Özdoğan and Ümit Serdaroğlu conducted topographic and archaeological surveys on the settlement in 1977. Later the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara conducted salvage excavations on the site under the direction of David French, between 1979 and 1990, the year in which the Atatürk Dam was completed. Unfortunately, both the site and the village were completely submerged by the artificial lake created by the dam (Pl. 2). The site covered an area of 200 × 140 metres and reached a height of 26 metres above the level of the plain (Moore 1993: 199; Blaylock & Summers 2014: 47)³. Occupation of the site is considered to have begun in the Late Neolithic and continued until the Middle Ages (Blaylock & Summers 2014: 47). The Iron Age was divided into ten distinct levels: I-III (11th-10th century BC), IV-V (10th-9th century BC), VI-VII (8th century BC), VIII (7th century BC), IX (first half of the 6th century BC?), X (later 6th?-5th century BC) (Blaylock 2009: 36; Blaylock & Summers 2014: 47-48).

Level X at Tille Höyük

Below the Middle Ages and Hellenistic levels, an architectural complex was identified that was called Level X (Pl. 3). The core of this small building complex was composed of an extensive cobbled open area and a nucleus of large rooms, surrounded by smaller rooms built on the perimeter wall along the top of the tell. The dating of this archaeological level, as well as others identified on the site, is problematic and far from certain (Blaylock 2009: 36). Level X at Tille Höyük consisted of a small, particularly well preserved palace, with walls preserved to a height of 1 to 2 metres (Blaylock 1999: 271; Blaylock 2009: 171). The surviving part of the complex covered an area of about 57 × 47 metres (about 2600 square metres), but the original size was bigger and was estimated as about 70 × 55 metres. From an examination of the plan and the relationships between the walls, it is clear that first the external perimeter wall (4 metres wide), which adapts to the edges of the hill, was built, and then what is called the ‘core’ of the complex, characterized by large central rooms (Rooms 8-14), and lastly the smaller peripheral rooms (average width from 1 to 1.5 metres). The

³ Elsewhere it is written that the cone of the mound had a diameter of 120 to 160 metres at its base and was between 20 and 25 metres high before the excavations (Blaylock 2009: 3).

walls were built with a stone sockle and a mud-brick elevation (Blaylock 2009: 190). In all, 35 rooms were identified during the excavations (Pl. 3). The ‘core’ of the complex (30 × 39 metres), consisting of 14 rooms, was located in the western part of the site. Careful observation of the plan of this ‘central’ part makes evident the design that forms the basis of the building, in which Rooms 9-11 stand out for their distinctive characteristics. These all had a square-based plastered hearth on the main axis, with an arched front opening with a horseshoe-shaped base. From their form the excavator deduced that they could not have been used for cooking, given that this shape did not allow a cooking pot to be placed easily, if not directly on the fire, and proposed instead that they were heating devices, with a hypothetical second function as domestic altars (Blaylock 2009: 200). In the same three rooms (Rooms 9-11), there were characteristic niches with multiple recesses, six in Room 9, five in Room 10 and seven in Room 11 (Pls. 4-5), for a total of eighteen niches (Blaylock 2009: 198). One of the most interesting rooms in this ‘core’ area is Room 14, a long columned hall. It has a rectangular shape (21 × 9 metres, with an area of about 189 square metres) and seems to have had at least two different phases, the first featuring two rows of column bases, and a second one in which the room was partly transformed in a storeroom (Blaylock 2009: 186, figs. 8.12-13). This complex was dated by the excavator, mostly on the basis of its architecture due to the scarce quantity of ceramic material found, to the Achaemenid period and more specifically to the later (?) 6th and 5th century BC (Blaylock 1998: 119; Blaylock 2009: 36, 204-205; Blaylock & Summers 2014: 48)⁴. Blaylock (2016: 416) has written: “*The conclusion that Level X represents an official or semi-official installation of Achaemenid administration marks out the Tille building as one of the only handful so far identified and excavated outside Iran*”. This Achaemenid date for Tille X is widely accepted (Khatchadourian 2012: 970, 973; Dusinberre 2013: 63; Khatchadourian 2016: 223). A possible ‘Median’, Neo-Babylonian period date for Tille X is discussed and rejected by the excavator (Blaylock 2009: 205-206), who sees an Achaemenid period date as the only truly plausible one. The impossibility of its attribution to the

⁴ Discussing Tille Level X, Summers (1998: 405) commented “*Thus the date is unclear and we are unable to remove the question mark from in front of “(?) Achaemenid” on the plan*”. It must be said that almost every attempt to attribute Level X to the Achaemenid era is accompanied by question marks, given the uncertainty of this dating.

pre-Achaemenid era is based on: 1) our lack of knowledge of non-palatine Achaemenid era contexts; 2) the fact that architectural elements considered to be ‘Median’ features are also characteristic of the Achaemenid era (stepped niches, multiple-columned halls); 3) the stratigraphic evidence and chronology of the earlier Level IX and the later Hellenistic Level I; 4) the scarcity of datable finds – which would in any case seem to refer to the Achaemenid epoch; 5) certain specific architectural elements considered to be of Achaemenid tradition (such as square bricks and red coloured floors). In contrast to the date proposed by Blaylock, Summers (1993: 85) has defined Tille X as “*an imperial Median establishment on the west bank of the Euphrates*”, a thesis later slightly revised as a Median or Achaemenid dating (Summers 1998: 405), assuming clearly a pre-Achaemenid era date for the complex. Some scholars have accepted this suggestion (Nunn 2012: 322; Saeedian & Gholizadeh 2019).

Discussion of the Tille X architecture and finds

As mentioned above, Blaylock, who has dealt with the publication of the Iron Age levels, sees in Tille X “an official or semi-official installation of Achaemenid administration” (Blaylock 2016: 416). Unfortunately, in the final publication of the structures identified in this level, the search for parallels for the building consists of a review of the Achaemenid and more generally Iranian evidence of the period without succeeding in identifying a complex that has substantially similar characteristics⁵. Careful observation of the development in plan of the Tille X buildings (which would make it possible to track down structurally similar complexes with regard to the layout of the rooms) however makes evident the conceptual distance between them and the ‘Persepolitan’ architecture which is often said to be similar. The Tille X complex exhibits a strong control over internal circulation, with limited routes that develop in a way that might almost be called labyrinthine. This layout contrasts sharply with official Achaemenid traditions; the linearity of the internal circulation as well as the externally-projected design found in both large and small imperial complexes is completely lacking. At the same time, and again in contrast with the Achaemenid architectural tradition, it must be underlined that the hypostyle hall (further discussed below), which is usually central in Achaemenid palace organization, in the case of Tille X is not at all prominent –

⁵ On this, see Blaylock 2009: 206-211, figs. 8.37-39.

indeed, it is almost hidden away in the overall structural layout. These architectural considerations alone would suffice to demonstrate Tille X's estrangement from the Achaemenid world, especially taking into consideration the architectural strategies used by the Persians in their conquered territories. In fact, where they could, the Achaemenids used pre-existing structures which they only modified, a circumstance that makes their presence almost invisible from an archaeological perspective. Where instead (in the absence of pre-existing structures) it was necessary to erect new buildings for the administration of imperial power, even Achaemenid provincial architecture was closely based on Persepolitan models⁶. For these reasons it is clear that the Tille X complex was not built by the Persians, but must rather be attributed to a pre-Achaemenid phase. Even the occupation of the complex in the Achaemenid period cannot be verified given the absence of diagnostic finds. However, it should be noted that this certainly pre-Achaemenid complex underwent alterations in a second phase, detectable only from an architectural perspective. This second phase could have followed not many years after the construction of the complex, and might too be plausibly attributed to the pre-Achaemenid era. Without necessarily wanting to postulate a 'Median' presence or dominion over these areas, it is clear that Tille X, rather than an Achaemenid complex, resembles the small fortified citadels of north-western Iran of pre-Achaemenid date, in their size and overall development, though less with respect to internal spatial organization⁷. One of the most interesting feature of the Tille X complex is the columned hall (Room 14). As already highlighted, two distinct architectural phases were clearly identified in the complex⁸; the second entailed a change in the intended use of the entire room. In Phase I the

⁶ The examples of the Southern Caucasus and Armenian Highlands are emblematic of the practice used in the territories conquered by the Achaemenids, as Florian Knauss has shown (Knauss 2005: 197-220; Knauss 2006: 79-118; Knauss *et al.* 2010: 111-122; Knauss *et al.* 2013: 1-28; Knauss 2016: 70-76). In the Armenian Highlands the Achaemenids reused the remains of the buildings and the control system established by the Urartian state, a circumstance that makes the Achaemenid presence practically invisible. In Georgia and Azerbaijan, where there was no state practice and structures, numerous complexes were systematically built, of unequivocal Achaemenid matrix, with a clear Persepolitan imprint visible in the organization, materials and architectural features. Examples are the buildings of Sari Tepe and Gumbati in Georgia and Karačamirli in Azerbaijan.

⁷ Sites such as Tepe Nush-i Jan, Baba Jan, Godin Tepe, Tepe Ozbaki, Tepe Gunespan and Haji Khan Tepe.

⁸ These structural changes seem to have mainly affected the eastern part of the complex. In addition to Room 14, structural changes also appear in Rooms 29 and 34 (Blaylock 2009: 192-194).

room was a classic rectangular colonnaded hall, which originally possessed two parallel rows of six columns, for a total of twelve (Blaylock 2009: Fig. 8.12). The Tille X columned hall appears small and hidden away when compared with the Achaemenid hypostyle halls, which were large and centrally placed in buildings. It has, instead, many elements in common with the typical colonnaded halls, characterised by the presence of wooden columns or pillars, which are known starting from the Late Bronze Age and spread especially in the Middle Iron Age (Iron II, 900-700 BC) and Late Iron Age (Iron III, 700-550 BC)/pre-Achaemenid era. These halls are found over a wide area which extends from the Armenian Highlands to north-western Iran. Similar columned halls are known in Urartian sites such as Armavir-blur and in Iranian sites such as Godin Tepe (Dan 2015: Pl. XV.C-E) and Ziwiye (Pl. 6). While in Phase I it is clear that the room had a function related to reception, in Phase II it was structurally modified, with the blocking of a door and the erection of a partition wall connected probably with the construction of a new roof, which divided it substantially into two rooms. In this phase, it appears to have become a storeroom, as indicated by the discovery of some *pithoi* still *in situ* (Blaylock 2009: 193). Another important element that must be underlined is the discovery of column bases in three other rooms, Rooms 9, 14, 29. In Room 9, basically structurally unaltered between Phase I and II, there were two column bases unlike any others in the complex (Pl. 7). These are the only bases made of basalt (75 and 70 cm in diameter), which have the unusual shape of a torus on a drum, and are carefully worked and finished (Blaylock 2009: 202, Figs. 8.32-33). Blaylock (2009: 202) has proposed as parallels some column bases identified in the Treasury of Persepolis (Schmidt 1953: Figs. 72i-j), but comparisons with sites in the area of northern Syria such as Zincirli and Tell Ta'yinat are also rightly made. We believe that for these column bases a regional development origin is more plausible, rather than necessarily seeking parallels with external – in particular Achaemenid – models, especially in an architectural context that is completely different from that of their classical 'Persepolitan' architecture. In Room 14, already considered above, the column bases (2 rows of 6 columns) were subsequently covered by accumulated material following the construction of a stone wall in the room centre. In general, these column bases were cylindrical limestone slabs, without any particular features, as also were the bases in Room 29 (Blaylock 2009: 202). The only element that could be considered diagnostic is the adoption, as a support for the wooden columns

of this room, of roughly worked stone blocks buried beneath the floor level, as attested in the Iranian sites of Godin Tepe and Nush-i Jan and in Erebuni in Armenia (Dan 2015: 26, 30, Pl. XIXA-D). The sixteen niches with multiple recesses identified in three Rooms (9, 10, 11) were rightly identified as a typical Iranian Iron Age feature shared by sites in the ‘Median’ area, such as Godin Tepe, Nush-i Jan and Baba Jan (Stronach & Roaf 2007: 194-196). The use of these niches, whose function is still uncertain⁹, spread also in the Uartian area during the 8th-7th century BC – examples are the small building at Girik Tepe (Pl. 8), in the Patnos region in Eastern Turkey (Dan & Vitolo 2016: 93, Figs. 4, 7-8) and the presence of ‘blind windows’ in Uartian architecture (Dan 2015: 43-46). Regarding the pottery and other finds from Tille X, the situation is complex. According to Blaylock (2016: 54), who has worked on the Iron Age material “*One of the most striking aspects of the Level X buildings was that they had been stripped of any contents, and left clean on abandonment*”. The very few potsherds had no clearly distinctive characters and were found sealed in a construction deposit, a circumstance that would explain their similarity to the finds of the previous period (Blaylock 2016: 55). Despite some early attempts to tentatively classify some of the forms as Achaemenid (French 1988: 336, Fig. 4), examination of the finds discovered during the excavations reveals the total lack of any pottery – or indeed other objects – that can be unequivocally attributed to the Achaemenids¹⁰. No traces of diagnostic ‘classic’ Achaemenid period vessels, such as ‘Western Triangle Ware’ were found during the excavations (Blaylock 1999: 271). Among the most interesting finds were fragments of Black Gloss ware tentatively dated to the 6th century BC and thought to come from the Aegean area, identified in the fills of the Level X rooms. Another interesting find is an unstratified¹¹ sherd of so-called Lydian Marbled Ware that has been dated to the late 7th to mid-6th century BC (Blaylock 1999: 272; Blaylock 2009: 204; Blaylock 2016: 62-63, Figs. 9.87, 9.88). According to Summers (1993: 88), Tille Höyük is the only site in eastern

⁹ In general, on the use of multiple rabbets especially related to doorways, see Roaf 1998.

¹⁰ On the pottery attributed to the ‘Achaemenid phase’, see also Fuensanta & Charvat 2005: 163, Fig. 6. In this contribution, the two stone column bases are not explicitly listed among the Achaemenid diagnostic features.

¹¹ Personal communication from G.D. Summers, 2020.

Turkey where ‘Median’ period pottery¹² has been retrieved, “*One group of pots was found in situ associated with the construction or a very early phase of occupation (...). These vessels were almost indistinguishable from those of the preceding two levels (post-Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian respectively)*”. This perspective was later taken up by Blaylock (2016: 55)¹³. In general, the few finds discovered seem not to include distinctive Achaemenid material (taking account the difficulties involved with identifying Achaemenid ceramics) that can help in the dating of the Tille X complex. Another intriguing feature of this complex (which has not been emphasized enough) is that the site seems to have been abandoned and emptied, which is the reason that pottery and other diagnostic material were virtually absent (Blaylock 2009: 197; Blaylock 2016: 54). It is also notable that the walls were found standing to roughly similar heights, a circumstance in contrast with the idea of a slow decay and collapse. It would seem instead to suggest that the complex was carefully demolished and infilled deliberately, rather than as a result of weathering or other human or naturally caused destruction¹⁴. This is another feature that the Tille X complex shares with the Nush-i Jan site. Indeed, in Tepe Nush-i Jan (where the so-called ‘Median’ occupation is dated to c. 750-630 BC), that was abandoned in the middle of the 7th century (Stronach & Roaf 1978: 10), many parts of the complex were infilled and sealed using mud-bricks, which contributed to its extraordinary good preservation, with standing walls 8 metres high (Stronach & Roaf 2007: 171-176). Also in other recently excavated sites considered to be ‘Median’, Haji Khan Tepe, Tepe Ozbaki, Zar Bolagh, Ulug Depe (Hemati Azandaryani *et al.* 2020: 92) and Moush Tepe (Mohammadifar *et al.* 2015: 236-238, Fig. 4), similar

¹² I will not discuss here the problem of defining so-called ‘Median’ period pottery. On this pottery and its problems and also its distribution in eastern Turkey, see Dan *et al.* 2019.

¹³ It has been suggested that in south-eastern Turkey there was a strong continuity of Late Assyrian pottery forms also after the end of the empire (Matney 2011: 454-455). The picture provided by Tille X is different; it is mostly the local indigenous assemblage that is still present, rather than exogenous elements (typically Assyrian pottery) (Blaylock 2016: 55).

¹⁴ This idea is reinforced by the fact that some excavators at the site noted that there was a windblown deposit on the floors, maybe connected with the intentional removal of the roof beams (personal communication from G.D. Summers, 2020; Blaylock 2009: 197). Blaylock too does not exclude the possibility of intentional demolition (Blaylock 2009: 197).

evidence of infilling and abandonment (and a paucity of pottery and other finds) has been identified.

Conclusions: Tille X? Neither ‘median’ nor Achaemenid

On the basis of the above discussion, we would like to propose a construction date for Level X of Tille Höyük in the first half of the 6th century BC, before the Achaemenid conquest of the region. The date for the complex proposed by S. Blaylock (1998: 119) is based on pieces of evidence that he summarised as follows: ‘*The assembled details of this building form a distinctive collection of Persian architectural features whose closest parallel is probably in the buildings of Persepolis of the time of Darius and Xerxes: stepped niches; free-standing hearths; basalt columns with fat torus mouldings (supporting timber columns, perhaps plastered); traces of red-coloured floors (...)*’. However, it must be underlined that, apart from some features of clear Iranian inspiration, there are few useful elements to support such a date. This is confirmed by the fact that in the final publications the search for parallels is resolved by the presentation of Achaemenid, and more generally Iranian, evidence (Blaylock 2009: 206-211, figs. 8.37-8.39; Blaylock 2016: XXII-XXV, I.3), without successfully identifying a complex with characteristics really similar to those of the Tille X buildings. The presence of two stone column bases, incidentally not among the most diagnostic types generally attributed to the Achaemenids, cannot be enough to consider the whole complex as a product of the Achaemenid Empire. Careful observation reveals quite marked differences between Achaemenid palace architecture and the Tille X building. First, the typical spatial layout of the Achaemenid palaces is totally absent here¹⁵; the Tille building shows no linearity in its internal connections, which appear almost labyrinthine in their development. The general absence of genuine ‘Persepolitan’ architectural features must be further emphasized. The column bases seem to not refer directly to Achaemenid models but rather to be in continuity with regional traditions. Another important consideration is that the peripheral palace complexes of the southern Caucasus, Georgia and Azerbaijan are well known, and demonstrate that when erecting new buildings the Achaemenids tended to replicate the models of their imperial capitals. Indeed, in Achaemenid

¹⁵ See, for example, Soheil 2019: 12-16.

architecture the hypostyle hall has always a prominent role in palace organization. In Tille, on the contrary, the only colonnaded hall does not appear central with regard to the other rooms, instead seeming almost ‘sidelined’ in the building’s overall layout. In the light of these considerations, it therefore appears evident that an Achaemenid era date for the construction of the Tille X complex is unlikely. Level X is stratigraphically later than Level IX, tentatively assigned to the first half of the 6th century BC, which in turn follows Level VIII. Level VIII, certainly attributable to the Assyrian era, is considered to occupy much, if not all, of the 7th century BC (Blaylock & Summers 2014: 47-48). The problem is that if the presence of a small Assyrian palace is out of the question, the length of the Assyrian presence cannot be established with certainty. This uncertainty does not allow the accurate chronological attribution of Level IX; it might also date to the second half of the 7th century BC, therefore sooner than proposed. Keeping in mind these currently unsolvable chronological problems, the close resemblance of the Tille Level X complex to the small fortified citadels attributed to the ‘Median Empire’ must also be emphasized; pottery from the so-called ‘Median period’ has also been discovered¹⁶. The absence, as demonstrated, of elements attributable with certainty to the work of the Achaemenids would suggest a date prior to the start of their domination of the Armenian Highlands. After all, the construction of a new fortified complex in territories controlled by the Achaemenids that possessed both local and exogenous characters, completely outside the imperial trajectories, appears unlikely. Moreover, we know that the Persians tended to reuse pre-existing territorial control structures when these were available, but when they built *ex novo* they did so in accordance with the well-defined characteristics of so-called ‘Persepolitan’ architecture. In order to accept an Achaemenid period date we should have to imagine that a local governor built Tille X, without any interference from the Achaemenids. The chronological situation that seems most likely is that Levels IX and X must both be placed between the Assyrian withdrawal from the site (Level VIII) and the beginning of Achaemenid domination over those lands, i.e. in the century between the second half of the 7th and the first half of the 6th centuries BC. In this regard, its construction may thus have occurred at a time when important sites located in the Armenian Highlands underwent modifications and alterations, perhaps

¹⁶ Personal communication from G.D. Summers, 2020.

under the influence of the architecture of the Iranian area. I refer to sites such as Arin-berd in Armenia and Altıntepe in Eastern Turkey, where in both cases the Uartian period occupation phases were followed by impressive renovations attributable to the first half of the 6th century BC. In particular, here two hypostyle halls were built which present unequivocal points of contact with the architecture of sites such as Godin Tepe and Tepe Nush-i Jan. The first half of the 6th century BC is currently considered to correspond to a period of alleged influence by the ‘Medians’ on the areas discussed in this text. Here I will not enter into the problem, already discussed elsewhere¹⁷, of the rule of these areas by an actual ‘Median’ Empire. What is certain is that traces of possible influences from the Iranian plateau can also be found in more distant areas, such as the Iron Age (900 BC) complex at Ulug Depe in Turkmenistan¹⁸. The origin of this new architectural tradition (the hypostyle halls mentioned above), which has manifestations in widely-spaced areas, is connected to complex problems that are difficult to resolve. In fact, as regards the architectural similarities between the sites mentioned above due to the hypostyle halls identified in them, two orders of problems must be taken into consideration. The first is of a merely chronological nature: since we do not have absolute dates for the construction phases of all these halls, it is difficult to postulate who has imitated whom. The second difficulty is connected with not taking due account of long-lasting cultural relations and exchanges that occurred between the Iranian plateau and the surrounding areas over the millennia. There is a tendency to consider relationships to have been unidirectional, whereas exchanges between areas should always be evaluated with a view to possible reciprocity. Basically, the idea of the centrifugal movement of cultural influences from the more civilized areas (the Iranian plateau in this case) to peripheral and therefore less ‘evolved’ areas remains something of a dogma. This assumption depends largely on our lack of detailed knowledge of the cultures that flourished in these regions. Furthermore, the tendency to postulate the (inevitable) succession of one empire after another is now seen as an unsustainable simplification that does not take into account the internal development trajectories of a given territory and the complex network of relationships that existed in these areas. Comparisons between the architecture of the so-called ‘Median’ hypostyle halls and

¹⁷ Dan 2015: 7-9.

¹⁸ See for example Bendezu-Sarmiento 2012.

those of the Armenian Highlands can only be used to support the probable pre-Achaemenid date of these structures and complexes, perhaps in the first half of the sixth century BC. We are far from being able to say who was the first to develop these halls. The question related to the construction period of Tille X must therefore be seen in the context of these complexities. To conclude, I personally favour a pre-Achaemenid chronological attribution, therefore certainly closer to Summers' proposal, but without necessarily seeing architectural features of Tille X as evidence for a 'Median' domination over those territories. Rather, it was a period when the architecture of north-western Iran had a strong influence on eastern Anatolia and the Armenian Highlands. The chronological and historical uncertainties regarding this time – not only related to Tille, but also to the sites proposed as parallels – preclude providing a narrower chronological range. Consequently it is impossible at the current state of research to evaluate Tille X against a more detailed historical background. The Tille X complex appears to have resulted from a series of local architectural traditions with the addition of elements from different regions, such as (presumably) the Iranian plateau.

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Pl. 1. Satellite picture taken in 1990, showing the location of Tille Höyük at the start of its burial by sediment from the River Euphrates (satellite picture from Google Earth).



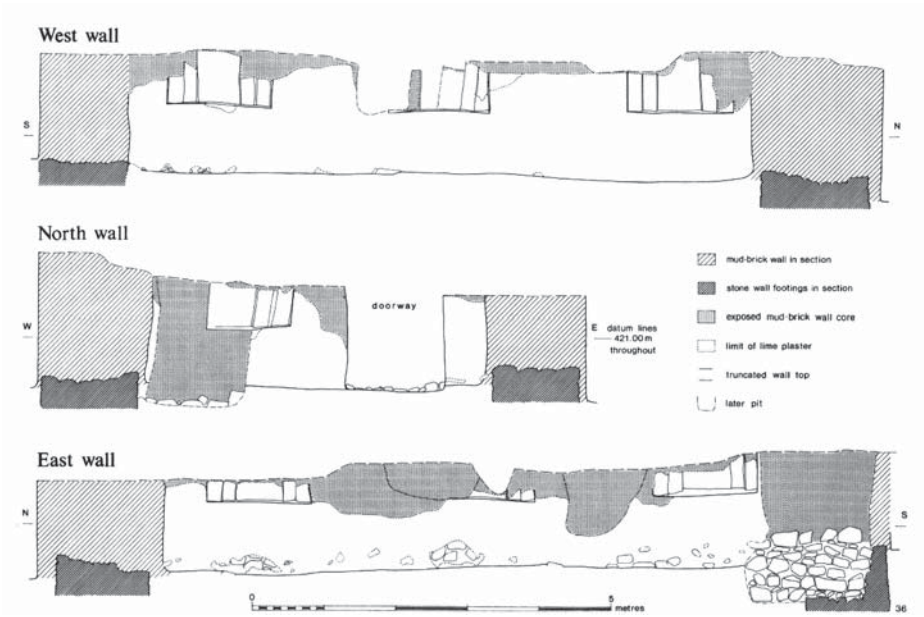
Pl. 2. Satellite picture taken in 2020, showing the current circumstances of Tille Höyük, flooded by the artificial lake created by the Atatürk Dam (satellite picture from Google Earth).



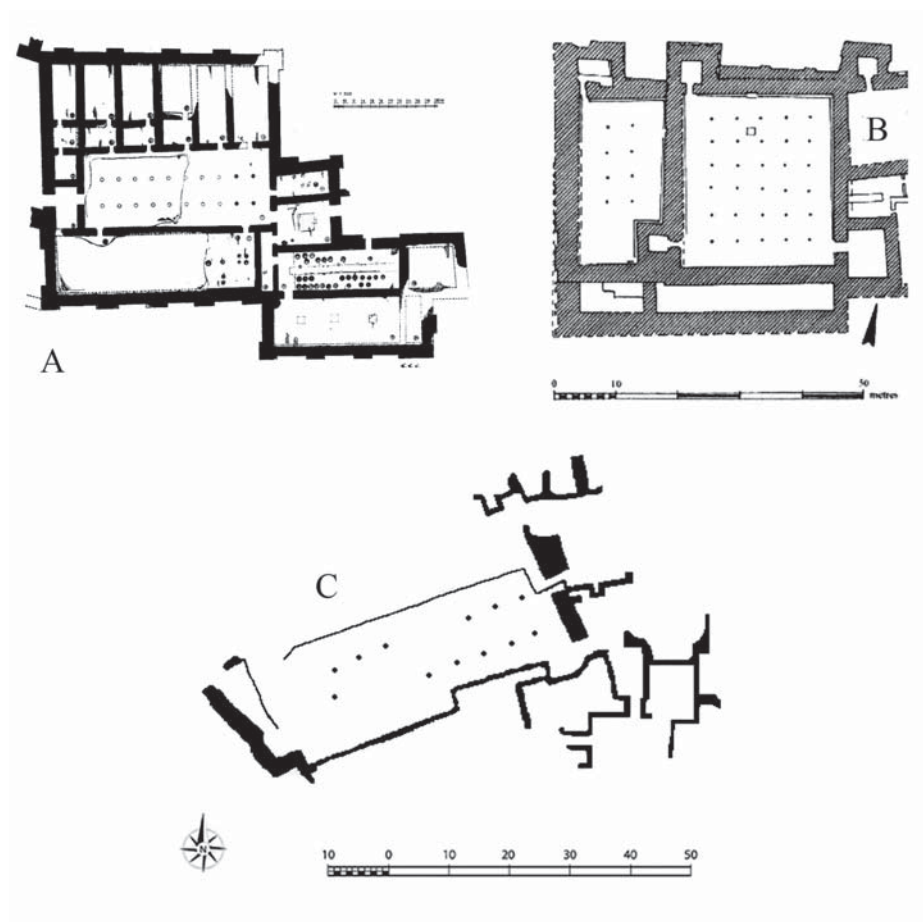
Pl. 3. Plans of Tille Höyük Level X
(adapted after Blaylock 2009: Fig. 8.12, 8.13).



Pl. 4. General view of the Room 11 with the stepped niches
(after Blaylock 2009: Fig. 8.24).



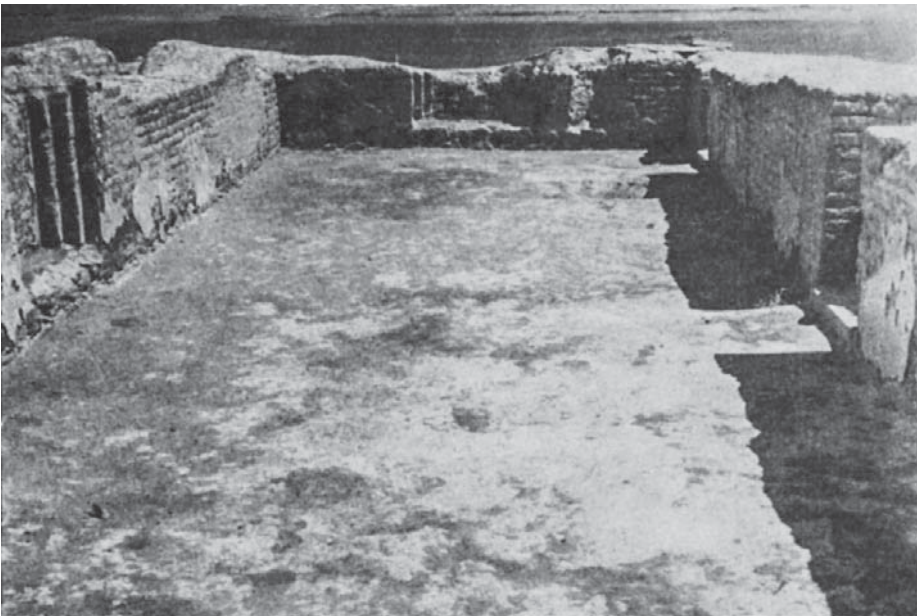
Pl. 5. Elevation of the west, north and east walls of Room 11
(after Blaylock 2009: Fig. 8.25).



Pl. 6. Columned halls with two rows of columns:
 A) Davti-blur (adapted after Martirosjan 1974: Fig. 30);
 B) Godin Tepe (adapted after Blaylock 2009: Fig. 8.39);
 C) Ziwiye (adapted after Javidnia – Hozhabri 2019: Fig. 4).



Pl. 7. The two basalt columns in Room 9 (after Blaylock 2009: Fig. 8.32).



Pl. 8. Girik Tepe. View from the west of the main hall of the palace with mud-brick niches characterised by multiple recesses (after Balkan 1964: Fig. 3).

ADMINISTRATIVE BULLAE FROM TAPPE BARDNAKOOON, A NEWLY FOUND LATE SASANIAN ADMINISTRATIVE CENTRE

BY

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Abstract: Excavations at the settlement of Tappe Bardnakoon in the Central Zagros region unearthed a hitherto unidentified administrative centre of the late Sasanian Empire. Among the materials found were a large corpus of 559 clay bullae. The 22 administrative clay sealings in the sigillographic archive of Tappe Bardnakoon increases the corpus of administrative bullae currently known. In general this latter group of bullae is homogeneous in terms of layout, shape, and dimension. The administrative sealings suggest that Tappe Bardnakoon was then located in the canton Rāwar-kust-ī-rōdbār which was part of the province of Gay and the region of Spahān. They show the administrative relations between Tappe Bardnakoon and the adjacent regions of Hūzestān and Pārs, and in particular with the provinces of Rām-Ohrmazd, Ohrmazd-Ardašīr, Weh-Andiyok-Sābuhr and Īg.

Keywords: Tappe Bardnakoon; Late Sasanian Empire; Administrative Bullae; Administrative Geography; Rāwar-kust-ī-rōdbār; Central Zagros

Introduction

Tappe Bardnakoon (hereinafter TB) is located in Farsan County in the modern province of Chaharmahal va Bakhtiyari (E 50°34'13.69" N 32°12'42.17") (fig. 1). The site is approximately 2.4km south-east of the village of Deh-cheshme near the southern shore of the Pireghar River. Farsan is one of the richest intermontane plains of the province in terms of its natural resources. At an elevation of just over 2000m above sea level, the Farsan Plain is 20km long and 6km wide and its topographic orientation follows the general direction of the northwest–southeast trending Zagros

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Mountains. While the central plain of Farsan is largely flat, the centre is slightly depressed. Controlling some of the few passes through the arduous Zagros Mountains, the province is a hub of the main inter-regional roads (Burn 1897; Ehlers 1988) among which is the ancient road of ‘Atābaki’ that has been partly examined in archaeological surveys (Khosrowzadeh & Habibi 2015) and is also documented by Ibn Battuta’s account in the 14th century (Ibn Battuta 1993 [1371]: 241). This road connected Iṣfahān on the central Iranian plateau to the south-western lowlands of Khuzestan.

The archaeological site of Tappe Bardnakoon is located on a roughly oval-shaped natural hill beside the Pireghar River (fig. 2). There is abundant archaeological material on the surface of this 150m diameter circular mound. Its height above the surrounding plain is 30m. Its artificial deposits, based on the depth of the illegally-dug ditches at its peak, are about 10m deep. The main settlement at this site is from the Sasanian period but some pottery samples from the Parthian, Achaemenid, Elamite and Chalcolithic periods have also been spotted alongside a few prehistoric lithics. Over the past few years clandestine excavations have destroyed the cultural layers of this site. Ironically, in aerial photos, the looting ditches have likened the peak of TB to a clay sealing, a significant collection of which was discovered at the site (fig. 3).

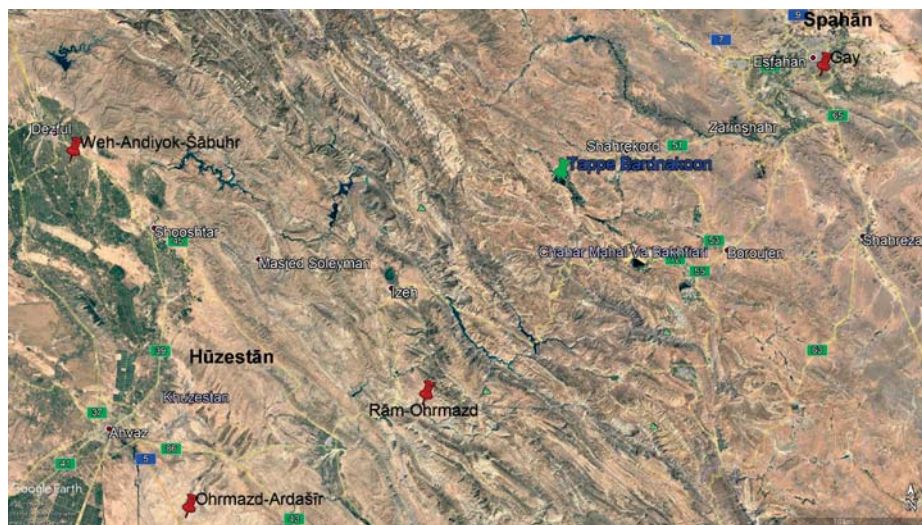


Fig. 1. Present-day province of Chaharmahal va Bakhtiari and its neighbouring Sasanian regions and provinces (After Google Earth 2019).

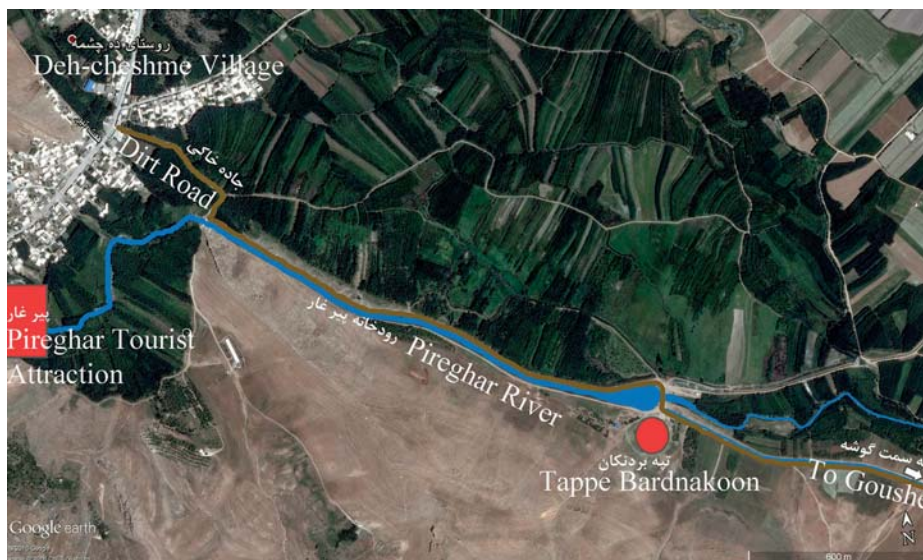


Fig. 2. Satellite image of the location of Tappe Bardnakoon in the Farsan plain (After Google Earth 2016).



Fig. 3. Aerial photograph of Tappe Bardnakoon beside the Pireghar River (© A. Khosrowzadeh and A. Norouzi).

The first two authors led the excavations at TB in October – November 2017 and September 2018. Only a small part of the site has remained undamaged by the illegally-dug holes. The excavations at this site were, therefore, limited to the small undamaged part on the southern slope of the mound which is less steep than other flanks. This area was excavated down to the final southern edge, in two 10×10m trenches named A and B. Trench A was excavated to a depth of 3m below the surface and Trench B to almost 3.5m (fig. 4). In order to give as detailed a description of the deposits and features as possible, each was given a locus number. Twenty-four loci are documented in Trench A, and 48 in Trench B.

The two seasons of excavations in Trench A unearthed traces of two walls which were constructed with air-dried chaff-tempered mud bricks and clay mortar. One of the walls is north–south trending and the other east–west. The bricks are red, grey and buff and are found in two sizes: 40×40×10cm and 37.5×37.5×7cm. Both walls are 2.5m thick and daubed with a single or multiple layer(s) of a plaster made of a mud-straw mixture that in some parts is roughly 2cm thick. There are also three narrow corridors, all of the same size and with a north–south orientation, which are located within the east-west trending wall (fig. 5). In Trench B, the lower course of a wall was discovered constructed from reddish-buff coloured mud bricks measuring 40×40×8cm. Parts of a wall with a north-west–south-east orientation was also revealed here. Two rows of brick, measuring 50×50×10cm, from this wall were uncovered.

Notwithstanding the controlled excavations, it is difficult to examine the stratigraphy of TB scientifically, given the disturbed condition of the cultural deposits. Moreover, the limited extent of the excavations prevents one making conclusive remarks about the plan of the structures. However, the evidence discovered offers insights into the function and date of this site. A silver coin from the reign of Husraw II (590–628) was found in Trench A. The abbreviation for its mint seems to be AY, i.e. Ērān-xwarrah-Šābuhr (Gyselen 1979), but ŠY, Šīrāz, cannot be ruled out. The date is illegible, but the type of assistants on the reverse indicates it should be dated to regnal years 2 to 10. Yet, as this coin was found among the disturbed surface materials, it does not provide a *terminus ante quem* for the site. The types of pottery wares and architectural structures, however, point to the possible late Sasanian date of the site. Furthermore, the discovery of a sickle, spindle whorls and abundant chunks of raw glass and iron scraps indicate some of the economic activities practised here. The high

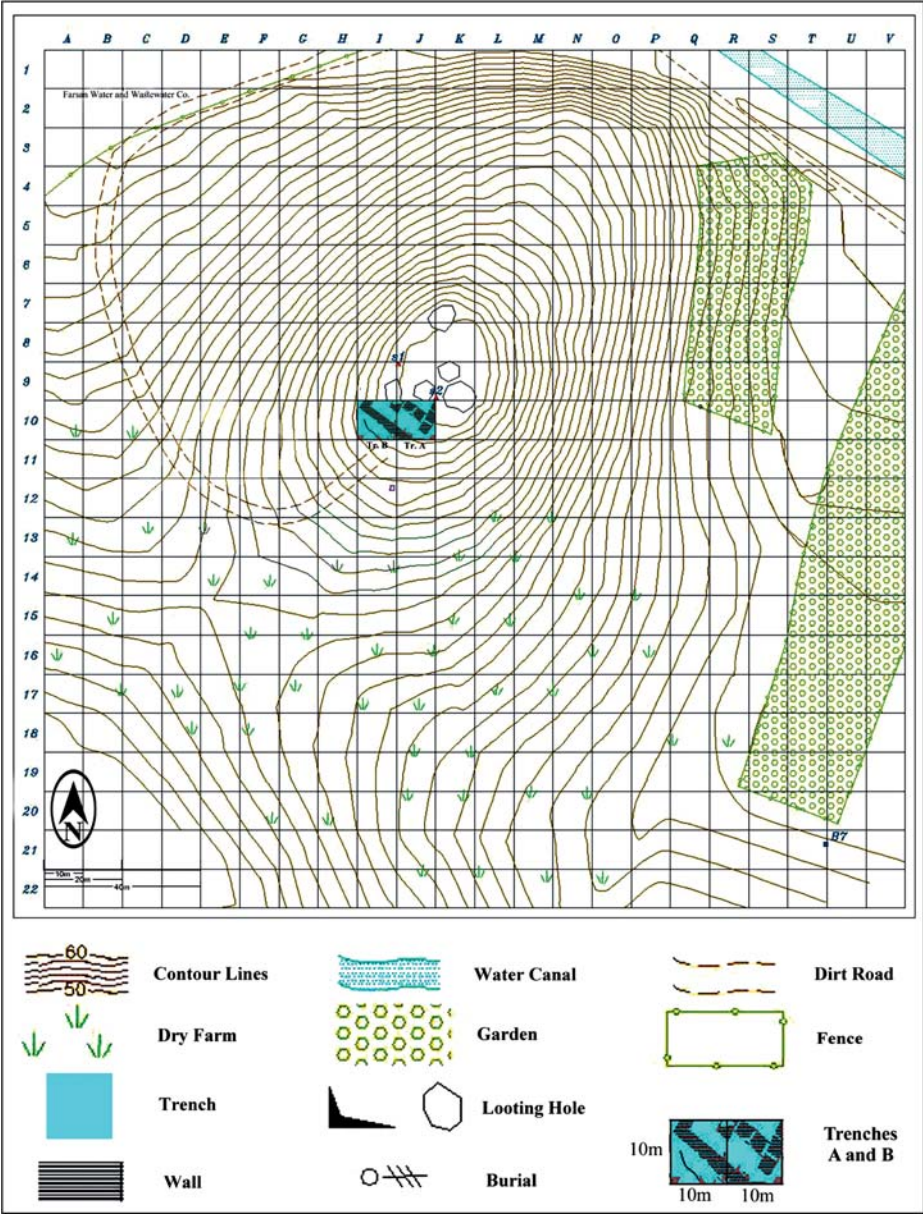


Fig. 4. General Map of the Site with the Location of the Trenches A and B
(© A. Khosrowzadeh and A. Norouzi).



Fig. 5. The excavated architectural structures (© A. Khosrowzadeh and A. Norouzi).

quantity of the storage jars, the most common pottery found at this site, is also noteworthy. The material, comprising 559 clay bullae, the assemblage of pottery fragments, alongside gems, tar pieces, oyster shells and cowries, all indicates the close relationship between TB and other territories of the Sasanian Empire.

Notwithstanding its distinct socio-cultural milieu and environmental features, the province Chaharmahal va Bakhtiyari is archaeologically a largely overlooked zone, compared to the neighbouring regions of Hūzestān, Spahān and Pārs. The present study of the recently discovered administrative bullae can provide valuable insights into the inter-regional administrative role this centre played during the late Sasanian period. It is not clear, however, if these bullae sealed documents or goods (about this see, for example, Huff 1987).

Administrative Bullae Found at Tappe Bardnakoon

The sigillographic archive of TB, with 22 administrative clay sealings, increases the corpus of administrative bullae currently known.¹ Half a dozen bullae were found in a fragmentary state (nos 3, 4, 15, 18, 19, 22:

¹ This corpus was gathered in Gyselen 2019.

194, 205, 208-209, 211) and cannot be fully studied. The other 16 clay sealings (nos 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 20, 21: 192-193, 195-204, 206-207, 209-210) are well preserved and can help answer some relevant questions.

1. *Content of the bullae: The seal impressions*

All these 22 bullae bear an impression of an administrative seal. The administrative seals have been analysed elsewhere and we will not discuss their content here (Khosrowzadeh *et al.* 2020). Examination of their impressions suggests that all administrative seals are dome-shaped.² Each complete sealing also has impressions other than those of administrative seals. Some of these seal impressions bear an inscription.

The following table presents all the evidence. The first three columns contain respectively the name of the administration (*DJD* = *driyōšān-jādaggōw-ud-dādwār*) and that of the province noted on the bulla, followed by the catalogue number of the bulla. The next six columns assign the number of seal impressions according to their content: A = administrative seal, M = *mow*-seal, P = seal with a personal name (and possibly a patronym), O = other inscriptions: abbreviation and/or formula, NI = not-inscribed, E = erased / worn. In some cases, impressions of the same seal are found on different bullae. This is indicated by asterisks in the columns (*, **, *** and ****).

Table 1. Content of the bullae: number and content of different seal impressions.

Administration	Province	No. Bulla	A	M	P	O	NI	E	Total Number
<i>Āmārgar</i> (?)	Xradēm-ud-Andahōm (??)	1	1				2	1	4
<i>DJD</i>	Gay	2	1*		1	1	1	1	5
<i>DJD</i>	Gay	3	1*						fragm.
<i>DJD</i>	Gay (?)	4	1(*?)						fragm.
<i>DJD</i>	Ohrmazd-Ardašīr	5	1		1		1	2	5

² All known administrative seals are domes made of chalcedony or agate; only one is an agate conoid (Gyselen 1989: 21). However, there is, at least, one exception (Gyselen 2007: 134-139): a 'dependent' seal with a setting and a knob at 5 o'clock. This exceptional seal shape can be explained by the location of its administration in the region of Nisibis on the border with the Byzantine Empire.

Administration	Province	No. Bulla	A	M	P	O	NI	E	Total Number
<i>Mowūh</i>	Gay	6	1**		1*		2		4
<i>Mowūh</i>	Gay	7	1**		1			3	5
<i>Mowūh</i>	Gay	8	1**		1*		4		6
<i>Mowūh</i>	Gay	9	1**		1**		3		5
<i>Mowūh</i>	Gay	10	1**		1**		1	2	5
<i>Mowūh</i>	Gay	11	1**				5		6
<i>Mowūh</i>	Gay	12	1			1	4	1	7
<i>Mowūh</i>	Īg	13	1***	1			2	2	6
<i>Mowūh</i>	Īg	14	1***	1		1	2	3	8
<i>Mowūh</i>	Ohrmazd-Ardašīr	15	1				1		fragm.
<i>Mowūh</i>	Weh-Andiyok-Šābuhr	16	1		1		2	1	5
<i>Mowūh</i>	...k..w'wy ?	17	1				5		6
<i>Ōstāndār</i>	Rām-Ohrmazd	18	1****						fragm.
<i>Ōstāndār</i>	Rām-Ohrmazd	19	1****						fragm.
<i>Šahrab</i>	Gay	20	1				2	1	4
?	Ērān-...(?)	21	1				3	1	5
?	Weh-...(?)	22	1						fragm.

2. Inscribed seal-impressions

The inscriptions on administrative seals are mainly written in lapidary script but with some letters in cursive script. This is defined as Middle-Persian in intermediate writing (Cereti 2008). However, all the inscriptions in Middle Persian on personal iconographic seals are in cursive script.

Unfortunately, the state of preservation of most of the seal impressions prevent one reading their inscriptions completely (nos 5b, 5e, 6b = 8e, 7d, 9e = 10e, 13c, 11f, 14e). On a few impressions one can read the title mgw, i.e. *mow* “magus”. So far this function is only attested by seal impressions on *mowūh* bullae of the Arōzān canton in the province of Īg. On seal 14e, one can read “Weh-Gušnasp, magus, son of Abrōg”. Another specimen, no. 13c, is less well preserved. The name and patronym remain conjectural and only the two first letters -mg- of the word mgw *mow* “magus” are legible. Other seals may have borne the word “magus” but we can no longer distinguish it on the seal impressions.

Some seal impressions bear a proper name, probably that of the owner of the seal. The proper name is sometimes supplemented by a father's name. Both can be read on a bulla from the *driyōšan-jādaggōw-ud-dādwār* administration of Gay (no. 2b): Yazdān-dād, son of Gōrgōn. Another *driyōšan-jādaggōw-ud-dādwār* bulla, this time from Ohrmazd-Ardašīr, has a seal impression (no. 5e) on which we can read the name Būd-Māhād, but not the patronym. Another, larger, seal impression on the same bulla (no. 5b) probably also bore an inscription but that is now too worn to read.

Other inscribed seals with a personal name are on *mowūh* bullae. A *mowūh* bulla of Weh-Andiyok-Šābuhr is sealed with the seal of Xwaršēd-Gušnasp (no. 16c). On some *mowūh* bullae of the province of Gay, one can still distinguish the first part of the name of the owner of the seal: no. 9e = no. 10e: Tahmāsp-... ..., no. 6b = no. 8e: ...Ādur(?)... and no. 7d: Ādur-(M...)...

Also, two aniconic seal impressions have an inscription: on 14b a two-line abbreviation -mhw- and on no. 2c a two-lined abbreviation -mhp-. The latter impression also bears the formula *abzōn* "Increase" above the abbreviation. Another formula is probably inscribed on no. 12d. This bears a very worn inscription, perhaps GDH, i.e. *xwarrah* "Glory".

3. *Physical Characteristics of the Bullae: Dimension, Weight, Colour, String Holes and Traces*

The majority of the well preserved administrative bullae measure between 4.5 and 6×4.5, and 6×2 and 3 cm. These specimens are all made mainly of clay with a mineral temper of sand and fine grit. Apart from five grey samples (nos 4, 6, 13, 14 and 18), the rest of the bullae are in various shades of buff and brown. These clay sealings are flattened balls with circular or slightly ovoid shapes. Their reverses are flat or slightly convex. All the complete examples have two string holes. String marks on the back of the bullae nos 1, 11, 13, 16 and 21 are visible as well. None of the reverse sides shows traces of fabric. Therefore, perhaps none of the sealings were pressed against a document written on fabric or an object wrapped in fabric.

The dimensions and shape of the bullae seem fairly homogeneous but their weight is very variable at between 11.08 and 98g. This diversity is due to the temper type of some bullae that have grit and gravel inclusions.

Moreover, besides the six fragmentary bullae, nos 5, 12 and 20 are partially covered with sediment as they were buried in a hard layer of calcic sediment.

4. *Layout of the Seal Impressions on the Bullae*

We may discern two main patterns of seal impressions on the bullae. One category (type 1) includes bullae where the central part of the obverse is shared by an administrative seal impression (A) and another seal impression of a different type (B). It has been arbitrarily decided that the B impression has a diameter larger than $2/3$ of the diameter of the administrative seal. The other arrangement (type 2) consists of bullae where the administrative seal impression occupies the centre of the bulla alone.

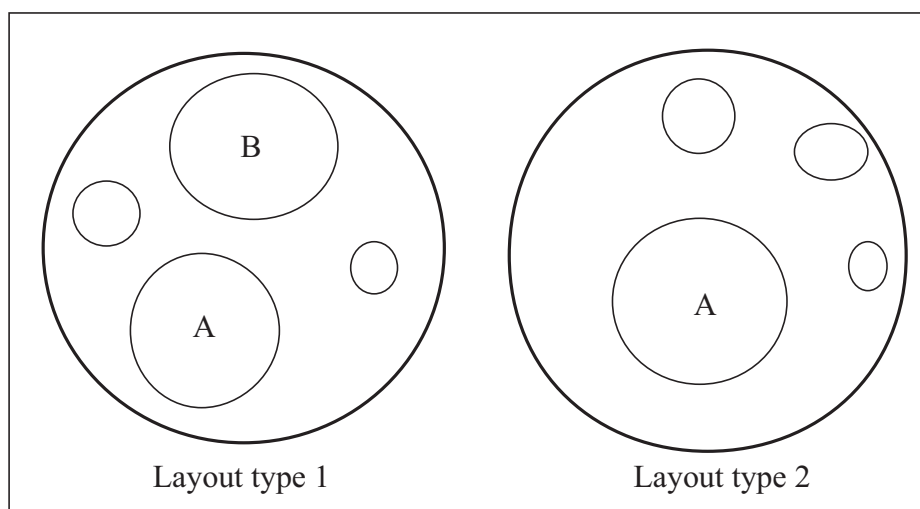


Fig. 6. Layout types on bullae.

Two subcategories can be distinguished in layout type 1:

1a) The impression next to that of the administrative seal is an impression of a convex seal. The diameter of this impression might be larger (no. 11f [worn inscription]) or smaller than that of its adjacent administrative seal (no. 21b [without inscription]).

1b) The impression next to the administrative seal is flat. These are mainly inscribed (nos 2b, 6b = 8e, 7d, 9e = 10e, 13c, 14e, 16c) but the inscription on no. 5b is completely worn away.

On the TB bullae, layout type 1 is only attested on bullae of jurisdictional administrations. The second seal may have belonged to the principal person who was involved in the case. Some of these seals belonged to magi and other seals to people who did not declare their function on the seal, but only their name. There are also seals that are not inscribed or their inscriptions are worn. These seals probably belonged to the principal co-signers. However, on some rare bullae, much smaller impressions can bear a name as well (no. 5e).

2) Layout Type 2

On the bullae of this type there is only one large seal impression: that of an administration. In the TB collection, type 2 is only attested on civil administration sealings: that of *āmārgar* (no. 1) and of *šahrab* (no. 20). Although the two *ōstāndār* bullae (nos 18 and 19) are fragmentary, we can consider them as other examples of the layout type 2 as well.

The other impressions are scattered on the sealings. It is noteworthy that, in 11 samples, seals have been affixed near the string holes left by the cords which run into the clay and attach them to the surfaces to be sealed. Although this location could be random, the possibility of its symbolic or legal value cannot be ruled out given the current data available. Particularly, we can point to the fact that one of these seal impressions, no. 5e, bears a personal name and two others (nos 8d and 11d), a letter monogram.

5. *The Shapes of the Seals*

In the absence of the seals, it is often not possible to recognise their shapes based on their impressions. Notwithstanding this, an impression can give us some clues. Flat impressions come either from ‘independent’ (for this notion, see Gyselen 1976) seal shapes (domes, ellipsoids and conoids) or ‘dependent’ (cf. Gyselen 1976) bezels with a flat engraved surface. Bezels with a convex engraved surface and cabochons make concave impressions. In some instances, the impression may also give us some idea of the setting in which a seal was mounted.

Of the bullae under examination each bear four to eight impressions of different sizes (see Catalogue of Administrative Bullae: 190-211). All the administrative seal impressions were made by dome-shaped seals. Half of these administrative seal impressions are accompanied by a principal co-signer’s seal impression. The majority of the impressions of the principal

co-signer seals are flat. This indicates that their seals were independent seals or bezels with a flat engraved surface (see layout type 1b). It is noteworthy, though, that nos 11f and 21b are impressions of convex bezels set in a mount (layout type 1a). In the TB archive, there are seven more impressions of this latter kind of seal which are anepigraphic (nos 6d, 8f, 10c, 14c, 16b, 17b and 20d). It is interesting to note that the impressions of four of these are near a string hole (nos 8f, 10c, 14c and 16b). Out of a total of 93 impressions on the administrative bullae in the TB corpus, 26 were made by convex bezels with various geometric shapes. Although they can be oval, circular, rectangular, lozenge shaped, square or quatrefoil shaped (no. 14h), the oval and circular shapes, represented respectively by 13 and 11 seals, are much more common than the others.

6. *Remarks on Some Co-Signers’ Seals on Bullae of Juridical-Religious Administrations*

Among the motifs represented on the principal co-signer seals, the most common is that of a male bust (8 impressions of 6 seals). Two of the principal co-signer seals portray a ram and one, a goose. A seal showing a lion’s head lacks any inscription.

These data have been collated in the following table. It presents the iconographic motif of the impressions in the first column and the type of their inscription in the second. The third column indicates the diameter of the co-signer seals relative to that of the administrative seals. The remaining columns provide the identification of the administrative seals (administration + province) and the catalogue number of the seal impressions. The iconographic order follows the classification system used in the most recent publications (see e.g. Gyselen 1993).

Table 2. The characteristics of the seals of the main co-signers.

Iconography	Inscription	Diameter	Administration	Province	Catalogue number
Male bust	(worn)	Larger	<i>Mowūh</i>	Gay	11f
Male bust	Name + patronym	Larger	<i>DJD</i>	Gay	2b
Male bust	Name + ? (worn)	Larger	<i>Mowūh</i>	Gay	6b 8e
Male bust	Name + ? (worn)	Smaller	<i>Mowūh</i>	Gay	9e 10e

Iconography	Inscription	Diameter	Administration	Province	Catalogue number
Male bust	Name + ? (worn)	Smaller	<i>DJD</i>	Ohrmazd-Ardašīr	5b
Male bust, full face	Name	Smaller	<i>Mowūh</i>	Weh-Andiyok-Šābuhr	16c
Ram	(illegible)	Larger	<i>Mowūh</i>	Īg	13c
Ram	Name, <i>mow</i> , patronym	Larger	<i>Mowūh</i>	Īg	14e
Goose	Name + ? (illegible)	Smaller	<i>Mowūh</i>	Gay	7d
Lion's head	(without)	Smaller	<i>DJD</i> (?)	Ērān-...	21b

Four seals, each with a male bust, deserve a brief comment.

1) The most remarkable seal impression is no. 11f (on a *mowūh* bulla of the canton Rāwar-kust-ī-rōdbār in the province of Gay). The impression was made by a large convex bezel with a diameter larger than that of the administrative seal impression. It is very unusual for administrative bullae to have a convex-bezel impression of a male bust which is much larger than that of the administrative seal. Another example is found on the exceptional bulla held at the National Museum of Iran (Gignoux & Gyselen 1987: 138, IBT1; Akbarzadeh & Daryaei 2012) on which the main co-signer's seal has a diameter of 39×35mm, while the administrative seal is 21×21mm.

The male bust on the TB impression wears a beaded 'Parthian' *kolāf* and a garment characterised by two fibulae on the chest which hold the folds of the coat. There are other seals, or seal impressions, with a bust of a man whose attire is similar (Borisov & Lukonin 1963: no. 6; Gyselen 1989: 149-166; Bivar 1990: 197, fig. 5; Lerner & Skjærvø 2016: 114, fig. 2; Gyselen 2008: 41-45). The oldest attestation of this type on a seal, probably from the Sasanian period, is associated with a Parthian inscription (see fig. 7, 1). Later seals of this type appear with an inscription in Middle Persian. These are all convex seals, usually made of carnelian. Some inscriptions testify to the importance of the owners of these seals who belonged to the class of high dignitaries of the empire, for example "Pābag, *mowbed* of Husraw-šād-Ohrmazd" (fig. 7, 2).³

³ The title -mgwpt- had been read correctly by Herzfeld. However, as the very last letter of the inscription and also some other letters of the last word are difficult to read on the photographs, the title was considered to be štrp (Catalogue KMKG 1993: 280, no. 133),

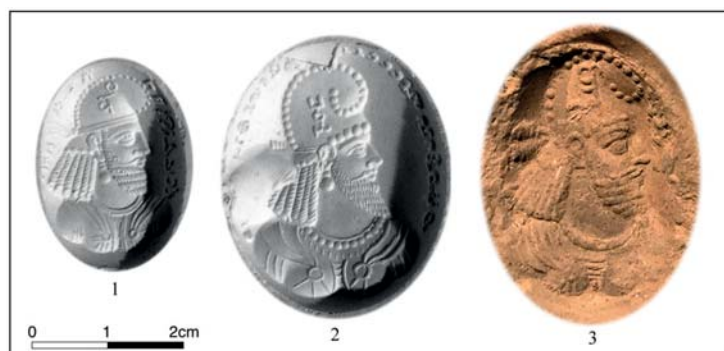


Fig. 7. 1-2: Seals of Agn-wist and Pābag (after Catalogue KMKG 1993: 281).
3: Seal impression 11f (© A. Khosrowzadeh and A. Norouzi).

One can read the letters dš(?) on the *kulāf*. In a few cases such letters may correspond to the first letters of the name, for example p'<p> k for Pābag (fig. 7, 2). This is not always the case, as the monogram on the seal of Agn-vist shows (Livshits & Xurshudjan 1989; Gyselen 2017: 89, fig. 5: c3). We are therefore left with the question: do the letters on the *kulāf* of seal impression 11f correspond to the first letters of the name of its owner? Obviously, this question cannot be answered since nothing has remained of its circular inscription which probably included the name.

Several sigillographers have suggested this type of bust was used in the 3rd-4th centuries and was then replaced by another type (Harper 1978, 142).⁴ Therefore, its presence on an administrative bulla, perhaps from the beginning of the 7th century, puts in doubt the period when this type of seal is said to have been used.

According to the *Madāyān-ī Hazār Dādestān* (Book of a Thousand Judgements), in the Sasanian period seals used for sealing documents had to be verified and authenticated before being used in legal proceedings (Macuch 1997). One can hypothesise that all the seals whose impressions are attested on the same sealing are more or less contemporary. This implies that the seals whose impressions appear on these administrative bullae are to be assigned to the same epoch, even if the date remains uncertain. However, archaeology often suggests that objects, such as seals,

even though the author of this notice must have had the seal in hand. This error was corrected recently (Gyselen 2019: 286-288).

⁴ The later type is illustrated in Gyselen 2019: 447, OTs3 and 448, OTs4.

remained in use for a very long time. Therefore, the question is, could an administration revalidate an “old” personal seal that had been engraved many years, if not centuries, earlier? It seems unlikely that such seals could be used in an official context if neither the original proper name nor, possibly, the legal function attached to them corresponded to their owner. It is difficult to think that this seal (dated 3rd-4th centuries) had been kept until the 7th century and that, during all this time, the administration legally approved it to seal administrative bullae.

Unfortunately, the inscription on the seal impression is completely eroded. It is therefore impossible to determine whether this is an impression of a personal seal with its owner's name or an official seal of a very senior dignitary that mentions the function of its holder.

We can conclude with a sentence by Callieri (2014: 179): “S’il est vrai qu’un sceau en pierre dure peut être utilisé pendant un long intervalle de temps, les contextes archéologiques fournissent des bornes chronologiques absolues qui doivent être prises en considération” (While it is true that a seal can be used for a long period of time, the archaeological contexts provide absolute chronological boundaries which must be taken into consideration).

2) The seal 2b (on a *driyōšān-jādagḡōw-ud-dādwar* bulla of Gay) is an interesting example from this archive. It is probably a personal seal of a high dignitary (fig. 8, 2).

The size of the seal impression is slightly larger than that of the administrative seal. The male bust wears a *kolāf* the lower edge of which is decorated with ‘floral (?)’ elements. This type of decoration on the *kolāf* refers to an administrative function and in particular, to the rank of *andarzbed* (Gyselen 2008: 35). It should be noted, however, that this seal is not as convex as one would expect for the seals of officials that give their titles. Furthermore, seal 2b is smaller than other seals of the *andarzbed* (Gyselen 2008: 47, 51-56) whose *kolāf* is decorated with a similar floral motif. It should be noted that this type of decorated *kolāf* is also shown on another seal with a much smaller diameter (16.3×15.3mm: Gyselen 1993: 93, 20.B.32). On the latter seal, someone has tried to remove the inscription which can indicate the reuse of this seal (Gyselen 1991).

Hence, we can conclude that this type of *kolāf* decoration is found on seals of very different sizes. As the seal 2b does not bear any title we cannot conclude that the owner belonged to the *andarzbed* corps. The



Fig. 8. 1: Seal of a *dar-andarzbed* (after Gyselen 2007: III/32).

2: No. 2b (© A. Khosrowzadeh and A. Norouzi).

3: Seal in carnelian (after Gyselen 1993: pl. XI, 20.B.32).

inscription of this seal only provides a name and a patronymic: Yazdān-dād, son of Gōrgōn. We suggest that no. 2b is the impression of a personal seal which belonged to a high-ranking person. Although not noted in the legend, the function of this person is probably indicated by the decoration on the *kolāf*.

A floral motif appears in the field at 9 o'clock. This ostentatious motif recalls other high officials' seals with a floral motif (or a monogram) in the field, such as the *naxwār* (Gyselen 2007: 293). This symbol possibly indicates the family or clan affiliation of the owner of the seal.⁵

3) Seal 6b = 8e (on two *mowūh* bullae of the canton Rāwar-kust-ī-rōdbār in the province of Gay) (figs 9, 1-2)

The dimensions of this seal impression are larger than those of the administrative seal impression it accompanies. It represents a bareheaded, bearded, male bust to the right with a vegetal base. These vegetal ornaments appear on Sasanian seals after the 4th century (Lerner 2006: 378).

⁵ For instance, see the official seals of *naxwār* (Gyselen 2007: 292-295).



Fig. 9. 1-2: Seal impressions 8e and 6b
(© A. Khosrowzadeh and A. Norouzi).

3: Seal (after Gyselen 1993: pl. XIII, 20.D.46).

He wears a simple torque and a beaded or pearled necklace, but the earring is eroded. In the margin (5-1h and 11-8h), there is a partially legible inscription of a personal name in cursive script:’twr.....

This is an impression of a personal seal that belonged to an official, although his function is not clear. A comparable seal, regarding both its style and details, is in the collections of the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris (Gignoux 1978: 27, Pl. V, 3.6; Gyselen 1993: 98, Pl. XIII, 20.D.46).

4) Seal 16c (on a *mowūh* bulla of a canton in the province of Weh-Andiyok-Šābuhr)

Seal impression 16c, with a diameter of 15mm, is a little smaller than its adjacent administrative seal impression. What makes this impression an interesting example from the TB archive is its imagery (fig. 10, 1). It represents a facing male bust with the head surrounded by flames. It shows a bearded (?) man who has a typical Sasanian hairstyle with two rows of curls either side of the face and a simple torque around his neck. Moreover, the bust is shown rising from a pair of leaves which is a common theme on Sasanian seals (see Harper 1973: 68-69). There is also a six-pointed sun-star to the left of the bust.

The motif of a facing bust is rare on Sasanian seals, especially on bullae. A facing bust with a halo of flames or light is even more exceptional. This motif appears as the only impression on a bulla in the collections of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Gyselen 1993: 223, no. 0.4a). In some rare cases this pattern is attested on administrative bullae: on a *mowūh* bulla of the province of Gēlān (?) in the British Museum, London (Gyselen 2012: 140, ZR14b) (see fig. 10, 2). This impression comes from a convex



Fig. 10. 1: Seal impression 16c (© A. Khosrowzadeh and A. Norouzi). 2: ZR14b (after Gyselen 2012: 140). 3: ZR6b (after *ibid.*: 135-136).

seal set into a mount while the TB seal 16c impression has a flat surface. Although the inscription on ZR14b is difficult to read, it is likely to be a seal of a *mow* “magus”. Another seal impression on a *mowūh* bulla from the province of Hamadān-kust-ī-Abhar, also in the British Museum, has several iconographic similarities with seal 16c, such as the plant base, the motif above the forehead, etc. (ZR6b) (see fig. 10, 3). This seal also is inscribed with the name of a “magus”. It is important to note that, in all the three cases, it is very difficult to see if the busts are beardless or not.

The identifications of such busts with the head surrounded by a halo of flames or light are multiple. However, these are not identifications of busts found on seal impressions on administrative bullae, but rather on coins (see among others Gyselen 2000, 2009), column capitals (see among others Compareti 2018) or seals (see among others Callieri 1990). In some cases, not only is the head surrounded by a halo of light or flames, but also the entire bust. This is not the place to discuss in detail the different identifications that have been proposed, but we can list the most common suggested so far. The radiate and flaming nimbi are largely accepted as attributes of the imagery of the deities Mithra,⁶ Ādur (literally “Fire”) or Anāhīd. One of the characteristics common to all these images is a beardless facing bust.

The seal impression 16c bears a Middle-Persian inscription in cursive script from 4 o’clock to 12 o’clock: “Xwaršēd-Gušnasp”. The choice of the seal’s imagery may be related to this name. Indeed, despite the many different interpretations of busts with a head surrounded by flames, it is significant to note that *xwaršēd* means “sun”.

⁶ However, the light halo represented on the examples where the bust has been identified as that of Mithra is depicted differently from those attributed to Ādur or Anāhīd, and also the one which is shown on 16c.

7. *Iconographic repertoire of seal-impressions on administrative bullae*
(see *Index of Iconographic motifs*) (see *Plates 1-7: 214-220*)

The choice of the iconographic motifs in this collection of bullae found in controlled excavations is of foremost significance as it can contribute to our understanding of Sasanian sigillography. Here we briefly describe the different categories, based on their motifs. The “iconographic” themes are presented according to a classification that many sigillographers follow (See for example Akbarzadeh *et al.* 2009) and was initiated in 1982 (Gignoux & Gyselen 1982). It does not claim to be a research tool but it may facilitate consultation of the types. On the plates, only the seal impressions which are sufficiently well preserved have been reproduced.

00. Aniconic inscribed seals

Some seal impressions have an inscription only and no iconographic motif. According to the content of the inscriptions, two types of these seals can be distinguished: seals of a territorial administration and personal seals.

00A. Aniconic administrative seals (Pl. 1, 2, 3, 4a-b: 214-217)

The twenty-two bullae of TB under examination revealed 13 different administrative seals, two of which are difficult to read. Among the remaining 11 administrative seals, eight are previously unpublished and can now be added to the corpus of administrative seals.

Three were already known, but in two cases they were less well preserved than the TB seal impressions. This means that it has been possible to improve their readings.

These administrative seals have been studied elsewhere.⁷ Thus, here it suffices to mention briefly the data they provide for the history of TB in the late Sasanian period.

The administrations represented are those of *āmārgar* (?) (pl. 1a), *driyōšān-jādaggōw-ud-dādwār* (pl. 1b), *mowūh* (pl. 2-3a), *ōstāndār* (pl. 3b) and *šahrab* (pl. 4a). The names of some administrations are uncertain (pl. 4b). These administrative seals come from Gay province, in which TB was located, and other nearby provinces. These provinces include

⁷ Khosrowzadeh *et al.* 2020.

Rām-Ohrmazd, Ohrmazd-Ardašīr, Weh-Andiyok-Šābuhr (at a distance of between 140 and 200km) and the province Īg whose *šahrestān* (capital of the province) was about 500km away.

00B. Aniconic personal seals (Pl. 4c: 217)

Two small seals' impressions bear an inscription in the centre with a few letters engraved on two lines (pl. 4b). So far it has not been possible to determine whether these letters represent the first letters (= abbreviation) of a proper name or of another term.

10. Human figure (Pl. 5a: 218)

The imagery of no. 21e comprises of a full-length standing figure represented schematically with a club (?) held in the left hand. This image might be considered comparable to the type of Heracles-like figures represented with a club in Sasanian glyptic (Lerner 2006: 375). No. 11b shows a standing naked person. The body is depicted in a three-quarter view or en face while the person holds an uncertain object with the left hand and leans slightly towards the left. It is not possible to decide on the object held and any interpretation of the figure represented on this anepigraphic seal would also be completely speculative.

20. Human bust (Pl. 5b, 6a: 218-219)

The seal impressions with a human bust belong to the principal co-signers associated with an administration (see 6. *Remarks on Some Seals of Co-Signers on Bullae of Juridical-Religious Administrations*). The other impressions of co-signers' seals with a bust are not well preserved (nos 5b, 9e = 10e) but are all part of a well-known repertoire on late Sasanian bullae.

30. Animal (Pl. 6b, c and d; Pl. 7a, b and c: 219-220)

The range of animal motifs is limited but there are only 22 bullae, many of which are fragmentary. Apart from the seals of the main co-signers (nos 13c, 14e, 7d, 21d), these seal impressions are generally small and mainly come from convex bezels whose mounts can still be seen in some cases (nos 8f, 14c, 6d). Among the animals represented are a few canines (Pl. 6b: nos 9c and 8b), couchant lions (Pl. 6b: nos 8f, 14c) and stags (Pl. 6c: nos 5e, 10c and 6d). The seal of one of the latter (no. 5e) bears the name of its owner.

Two seal impressions with a beribboned ram (Pl. 6d: 14e and 13c) are attested on two different bullae of the *mowūh* of Arōzān in the province of Īg (nos 13 and 14). These are impressions from principal co-signer's seals, both of whom are a *mow* 'magus'. On seal 14e, his name, function and father's name can still be read "Weh-Gušnasp, *mow*, son of Abarōg". On this seal, the animal wears on the chest a ring with three pearls, a motif often attested in connection with the ram (Gyselen 1990). These two impressions with the motif of a beribboned ram are large. Several seals of magi with this motif are known (Gyselen 1995: 128 and n. 55; 130, fig. 3b and c). The magi seem to have had a keen interest in the ram motif. This is not surprising since the ram is invariably regarded as a beneficial animal and has symbolic divine, royal and astral connotations in visual culture.

Seals with a bird (Pl. 7a-b) are numerous and include small seals showing a rooster, partridge, duck, etc. Two seals are larger. One, showing a goose with an inscription giving the name of the owner of the seal, is found on a bulla which also has the administrative seal impression of a *mowūh* office in the province of Gay (no. 7). It is the seal of a principal co-signer left by a dome-shaped seal smaller than the adjacent administrative seal impression. This seal impression (no. 7d) depicts a goose to the right with the body three-quarters facing, the head in profile and two displayed wings. Very few seals with this motif are attested (Gropp 1974: 120, B7; 133; pl. XXI, B.7; for the inscription, see Gignoux 1975: 173). Unfortunately, the inscription cannot be read completely.

A large impression of a convex bezel, a principal co-signer seal, carries a lion's head (Pl. 7c: 21b). The convex bezel was set in a mount with a broad flat border. No real parallel can be found for this profile lion's head.

40. Fantastic being (Pl. 7b; 17e: 220)

Another, relatively large, seal bears a motif which, at first sight, looks like a bird. Despite the impression not being well preserved, it seems that the claws are replaced by animal heads, and that the tail of the bird could be a horse head (?). The motif in the field, which looks like an "s", is exceptional.

50. Natural device (Pl. 7d: 220)

Three seal impressions bear a floral motif. Nos 20d and 2e are common patterns, but the one on no. 9d seems quite unusual. Unfortunately, the pattern is not clearly visible.

70. Monogram (Pl. 7e: 220)

Three, almost legible, seal impressions bear monograms. Two are letter monograms which may contain the name of the owner of the seal (Gyselen & Monsef 2012).

Concluding Remarks

16 clay bullae were found among the surface materials of the mound and the rest, including all the administrative bullae, were discovered in Trench B. The excavations in this trench have probably located a repository at TB where the used sealings, perhaps alongside legal and administrative documents, were kept.

With one exception, the iconographic and epigraphic repertoire of all the seal impressions on the administrative bullae belongs to the late Sasanian period. This exception (seal no. 11f, see pl. 5b) poses a question that cannot be answered: is it a seal belonging to the 3rd-4th centuries that was legalised again in the 6th-7th centuries for administrative purposes, or did this type of seal remain in continuous use from the 3rd-4th centuries to the end of the Sasanian era?

The collection introduced here accords well with the artistic and symbolic aspects of Sasanian glyptic conventions. The TB archive confirms the characteristics of Sasanian seals in terms of their unprecedented popularity and roughly standardised motifs, despite their owners' distinct social ranks (Ritter 2012: 100; 2017: 284). Different seal impressions bear common themes and subjects, yet in distinct styles from schematised to quite naturalistic.

The noticeable standardisation of material culture and the evidence of inter-regional interaction point to a strong interdependence on a large scale. The imagery and legends of the seal impressions and the procedure of sealing the clay bullae conform to those known from other territories of the late Sasanian Empire, especially those in Pārs at Qasr-i Abu Nasr and Tole Qaleh Seyfabad. The legal and economic activities carried out at TB were, therefore, in accord with the formal legal standards and under the supervision of the central state. Examination of these administrative bullae casts light on the onomastica, either personal or place names, together with beliefs and interactions in a strategic yet largely overlooked region in the late antique Central Zagros. The canton of Rāwar-kust-ī-rōdbār, nowadays Tappe Bardnagoon, actively participated in the socio-political milieu of the

late Sasanian Empire. As an administrative centre in the province of Gay, it facilitated interactions among different provinces of *Ērānšahr* (fig. 1), particularly Gay in Spahān, Rām-Ohrmazd, Ohrmazd-Ardašīr and Weh-Andiyok-Šābuhr in Hūzestān, and Īg in Pārs.

Excavations at TB were rewarding yet limited. In spite of the ongoing destruction of this important site, further fieldwork may lead to the discovery of valuable data and a better understanding of the architectural structures and their function(s).

Abbreviations

QAN	Qasr-i Abu Nasr (Ardašīr-xwarrah province, Pārs region)
TB	Tappe Bardnakoon (Gay province, Spahān region)
TQS	Tole Qaleh Seyfabad (Bišābuhr province, Pārs region)

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CATALOGUE OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE BULLAE
DISCOVERED AT TAPPE BARDNAKÖÖN

Preliminary Remarks


The following catalogue lists all the administrative clay sealings found at TB. They are arranged in alphabetical order of the names of the administrations — *āmārgar*, *driyōšān-jādagōw-ud-dādwar*, *mowūh*, *ōstāndār*, *šahrab* — followed by the undetermined administration names. Within each group, the bullae are arranged in alphabetical order of the names of the provinces — Gay, Īg, Ohrmazd-Ardašīr, Rām-Ohrmazd, Weh-Andiyok-Šābuhr.

Each catalogue entry for the bulla starts with the field inventory number given to the bulla during the excavations. This is followed by the dimensions (in millimetres), the weight (in grams), the colour, other material characteristics and the number of seal impressions.


The dimensions (in mm) and shape of each seal impression is given. The shape is not always given as the dimensions indicate whether an impression is circular or oval. Therefore, it seems superfluous to note this aspect. The shape of the surface is only specified if the seal is rectangular or lozenge shaped. When the impression is of a flat surface, this information is noted only if one can still see the setting of the frame. On the other hand, the concave shape of an impression made by a convex bezel is systematically mentioned.


Both sides — obverse and reverse — of the bullae have been photographed (© A. Khosrowzadeh and A. Norouzi). These photographs are given in the catalogue on a 1:1 scale, except in a few cases where the recto-verso photographs extend over the width of the page (nos 5, 9, 11, 13, 14 and 16). The exact dimensions of each bulla can be calculated from the scale reproduced on each photograph. In addition, the dimensions are also mentioned in the catalogue.

The photographs of each legible seal impression are reproduced in the plates at the end of the article (© A. Khosrowzadeh and A. Norouzi). They are reproduced on a 2:1 scale and classified according to iconographic themes.

All the inscriptions are in Middle Persian. Some are in lapidary script, others in cursive script. The term “cursive script” refers to Book Pahlavi (MacKenzie 1971: xi).¹ The lapidary and cursive scripts are distinguished, among other things, by the fact that certain letters are represented in lapidary writing by different signs and in cursive writing by the same sign. Thus the letters ’āleph and hēt are respectively written a and h in lapidary script, while the two letters are represented by the same sign  in cursive script. The lapidary script on the administrative bullae of the 6th and 7th centuries, however, differs from the lapidary script used in inscriptions of the 3rd century. On the late Sasanian seals, the writing of certain letters became cursive. One may recall, for example, the word *āmārgar* where the

¹ For a more detailed approach to cursive writing, see Cereti 2008.

letter m is written with the cursive m  and linked to the preceding and following letters.

In this catalogue, the inscriptions are given in transliteration, transcription and translation. For inscriptions in cursive writing, transliteration interprets letters whose reading is uncertain. Thus, the cursive letter  may be transliterated n (n in lapidary script) or w (w in lapidary script) depending on the reading assigned.

For the transliteration, the usual conventions are used:

- [] almost certain restoration
- () uncertain restoration
- < > addition
- { } suppression
- ... indicate illegible letters

* after number of seal: illustrated on the plates: 214-220

// separates the inscription in the centre from the inscription in the margin

Āmārgar (Accountant, financial officer) bulla
Unidentified province(s)



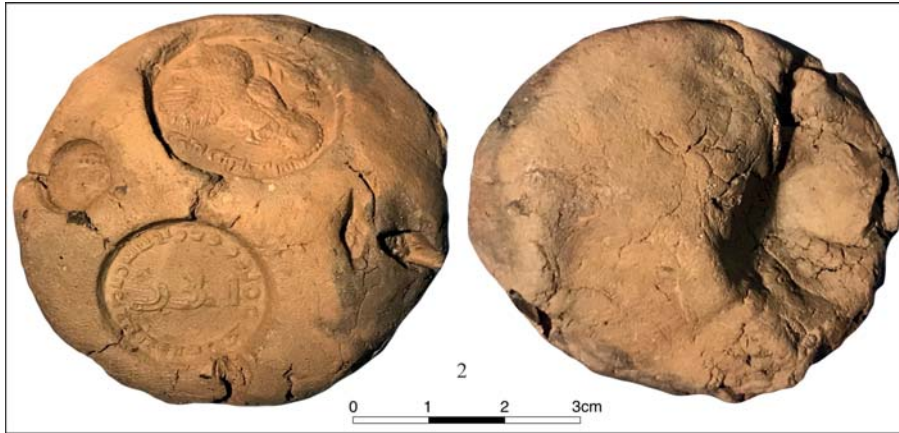
1. TB B33-17

45×42×17mm, 28g, light brown. A concave reverse with clear visible string marks.

Bulla with 2 string holes and 4 seal impressions:

- a)* Impression, 21×21mm, of a dome. Inscription in Middle Persian, in lapidary script:
 - in the field, on two lines:
 1. hlt(ym)
 2. W ʾndhwm
 - in the margin (from 4h to 2h): [ʾ]mʾ[kl] followed by o o o o o // o o o o
i.e. xradēm (?) / ud andahōm (?) // āmārgar
“Āmārgar of Xradēm (?) - ud-Andahōm (?)”
- b) At 2h, impression, 10×6mm, of an ellipsoid seal. Ram (?).
- c) At 3h, impression, 9×7mm, of a rectangular bezel. Indistinct.
- d) At 12h, impression, 10×9mm. Two quadrupeds.

Driyōšān-jādaggōw-ud-dādwar (attorney and legal expert of the poor²) bullae
Province of Gay



2. TB B39-15

58×52×26mm, 68g, light brown with scattered scorch marks. A hole with 2.4mm diameter and 0.3mm depth in its underside that is perhaps made by a door knob.

Bulla with 2 string holes and 5 seal impressions:

- a)* Impression, circular, 19×19mm, of a dome (= 2a, and maybe = 3a). Inscription in Middle Persian, in lapidary script:
 - in the field, on one line: gdy
 - in the margin (2-4h): gdy dl {y} gwš'n y'tkgwby <W> d'twbl(y) o o
i.e. gay / gay driyōšān jādaggōw <ud> dādwar
“Gay / Driyōšān-jādaggōw-ud-dādwar of < the province of > Gay”.
- b)* At 1h, impression, 23×23mm, probably of a dome. Male bust to right. In the field, left, a floral motif.
In the margin (4-1h), inscription in Middle Persian, in cursive script:
yzd'nd't y gwlgn'n, i.e. yazdāndād ī gōrgōnān “Yazdāndād, son of Gōrgōn”.
- c)* At 10h, impression, 7×7mm, of a convex bezel. Inscription in Middle Persian:
 - in the field, on one line, in lapidary script: mhp and a waning crescent moon below
 - in the margin (1-11h), in cursive script: 'pzwn' i.e. abzōn “Increase”
- d) At 2h, impression, 9×2mm, of a lozenge shaped bezel. Indistinct.
- e)* At 2h30, impression, 3×11mm, of a lozenge shaped bezel. Floral motif.

² Frye 1973: 52.



3. TB B46-27

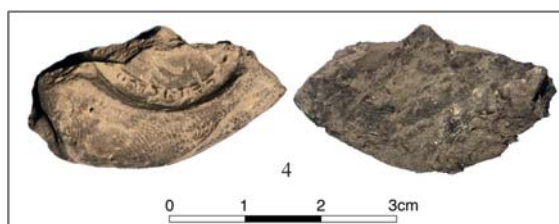
61×47×21mm, 49g, buff. Convex reverse with a string imprint.

Fragmentary bulla with one fragmentary seal impression:

a)* Impression, 19×19mm, of a dome (= 2a, and maybe = 4a). Inscription in Middle Persian, in lapidary script:

- in the field, on one line: traces of three letters, maybe *gdy*
- in the margin (1-4h): (*gdy* *dl{y}gwš'n y't*)*kgwb(y <W> d't)wb(ly)*
i.e. (*gay*) // (*gay driyōšān jāda*)*ggōw (<ud> dād)wa(r)*
“*Gay // Driyōšān-jādaggōw-ud-dādwar of <the province of> Gay*”.

Province of Gay (?)



4. TB B27-5

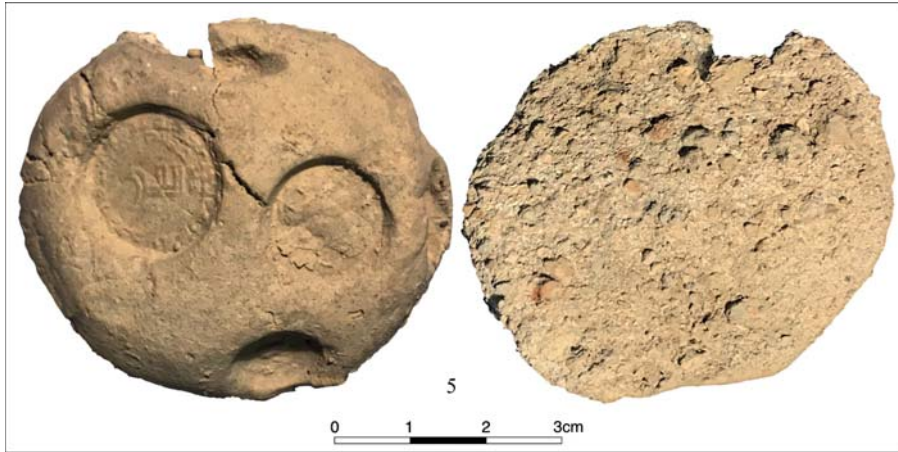
34×20×13mm, 11.08g, light grey.

Fragmentary bulla with one fragmentary seal impression (probably = 2a, 3a):

a)* Fragmentary impression, 19×19mm, of a dome. Inscription in Middle Persian, in lapidary script:

- in the field, on one line: traces of three letters, probably *gdy*
- in the margin (1 to 4 h): ((*gdy*) *dl{y}gwš'n y'tk*)*gwby <W> d'twb(ly?)*
i.e. (*gay?*) // *gay (driyōšān jādag)gōw (<ud> dād)wa(r)*
“*Gay (?) // Driyōšān-jādaggōw-ud-dādwar of <the province of> Gay (?)*”

Province of Ohrmazd-Ardašīr



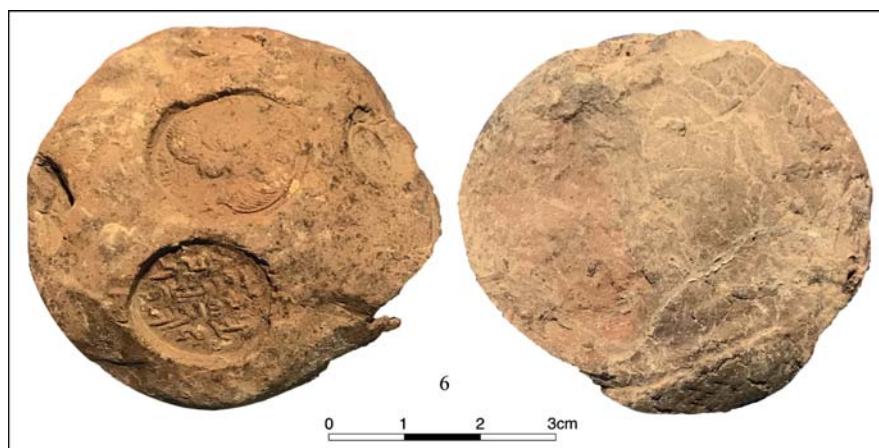
5. TB B6-3

60×53×25mm, 68.40g, buff. Calcified underside.

Fragmentary bulla with 2 string holes and 5 seal impressions:

- a)* Impression, 21×21mm, of a dome. Inscription in Middle Persian, in lapidary script:
 - in the field, on one line: `w
 - in the margin, on two lines: 1. From 3h to 3 h: `wlmzd (‘lth)štr dlgwš’n (y’t), 2. From 3h to 10h: (kgw)by <W> d’t(wbly)
 i.e. AW // ohrmazd ardašīr driyōšān jād / aggōw <ud> dādwar
 “AW / *Driyōšān-jādaggōw-ud-dādwar* of <the province of> Ohrmazd-Ardašīr”
- b) At 3h30, impression, 17×17mm, of a dome. Eroded bust to right.
- c) At 4h, impression. 13×7mm. Indistinct.
- d) At 4h30, impression. 11×5mm, of a lozenge shaped bezel. Indistinct.
- e)* At 5h, impression, 12×12mm, of a convex bezel. Near a string hole. In the field, running stag to right. In the margin, from 12h to 7h, inscription in Middle Persian, in cursive script: bwtmh’t’ y m..., i.e. būdmāhād ī m... “Būd-Māhād, ..”. Ph. Gignoux reads lwtmh’t’, i.e. rōdmāhād.

Mowūh (Office of magi³) bullae
 Province of Gay
 Canton of Rāwar-kust-ī-rōdbār



6. TB B19-11

55×51×24mm, 54.71g, light grey with a red core. Reverse is partly broken and has traces of a string.

Bulla with 2 string holes and 4 seal impressions:

- a)* Impression (= 7a, 8a, 9a, 10a, 11a), 17×17mm, of a dome. Inscription in Middle Persian, in lapidary script:
- in the field, on four lines:
 1. [l']wl
 2. [kwst' ZY]
 3. l[wt]'b[l]
 4. mgwh
 - in the margin (3 h): [gd]
 i.e. rāwar kust ī rōdbār mowūh //gay
 “*Mowūh* of Rāwar, side of the river bank, <province of> Gay”
- b)* At 1h, impression, 19×19mm, probably of a dome (= 8e). Male bust to right. In the margin (5-1h, and 11-8h), inscription in Middle Persian, in cursive script: ...'twr..., i.e. ...ādur ... “...Ādur...”
- c) At 1h30, impression, 12×6mm, of a lozenge shaped convex bezel (?). Floral motif (?).
- d)* At 2h, impression, 11×8mm, of a convex bezel set in a mount. Crouching stag within a border.

³ Sundermann 1989: 362.



7. TB B30-4

45×45×20mm, 55.76g, buff. A rather convex reverse with string marks.

Bulla with 2 string holes and 5 seal impressions:

- a)* Impression (= 6a, 8a, 9a, 10a, 11a), 17×17mm, of a dome. Inscription in Middle Persian, in lapidary script:
 - in the field, on four lines:
 1. l'wl
 2. kwst['ZY]
 3. lwt'b'l
 4. mgwh
 - in the margin (3 h): gd
 i.e. *rāwar kust ī rōdbār mowūh //gay*
 “*Mowūh* of *Rāwar*, side of the river bank, <province of> *Gay*”.
- b) At 2h, impression, 1×1mm, of a rectangular bezel. Indistinct.
- c) At 6h, impression, 6×3mm, of a rectangular bezel. Calcified and indistinct.
- d)* At 10h, impression, 12×12mm, of a dome (?). Goose to right with spread wings. In the margin (5-1h and 11-8h), inscription in Middle Persian, in cursive script: *'twr m... /(gwšn)sp*, i.e. *ādur ... (gušna)sp* “*Ādur, ...-Gušnasp*”.
- e) At 12h, impression, 6×6mm, of a rather convex bezel. Indistinct.



8. TB B33-5

50×50×25mm, 61g, brownish buff. A concave underside.

Bulla with 2 string holes and 6 seal impressions:

a)* Impression (= 6a, 7a, 9a, 10a, 11a), 17×17mm, of a dome. Inscription in Middle Persian, in lapidary script:

– in the field, on four lines:

1. l'wl
2. [kw]st' ZY
3. [l]wt'b'l
4. mgwh

– in the margin (at 3 h): gd

i.e. *rāwar kust ī rōdbār mowūh //gay*

“*Mowūh* of *Rāwar*, side of the river bank, <province of> *Gay*”.

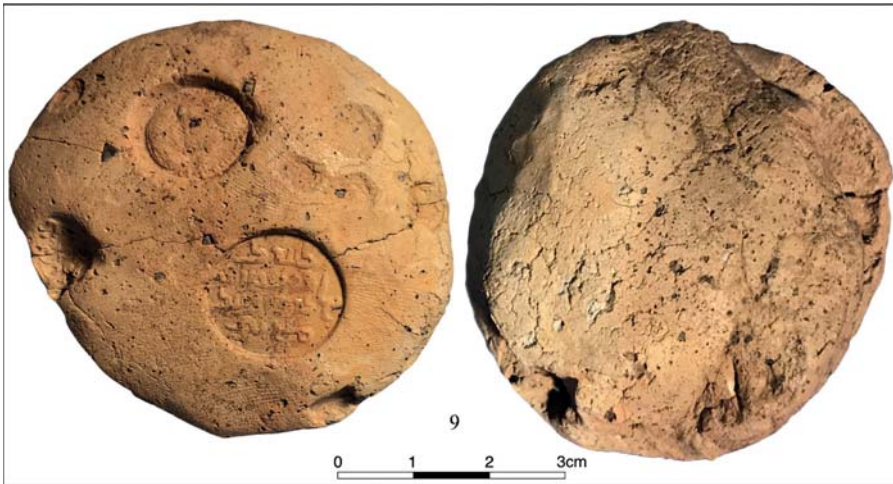
b)* At 2h, impression, 6×6mm, of a convex bezel. Canine to right with 4 small objects (astral symbols?) above it.

c) At 4h, impression, 6×6mm, of a convex bezel. Monogram.

d) At 4h30, impression, 8×7mm, of a rectangular bezel. Near a string hole. Monogram.

e)* At 5h, impression, 19×19mm, of a dome (= 6b). Male bust to right. In the margin (5-1h, and 11-8h), inscription in Middle Persian, in cursive script: ...'twr..., i.e. ...ādur ... “...Ādur...”

f)* At 8h, impression, 11×11mm, of a convex bezel set in a mount. Near a string hole. Couchant lion to right.



9. TB B33-19

61×57×30mm, 33g, brownish buff with occasional brown marks. A convex under-side with a clear lateral string mark.

Bulla with 2 string holes and 5 seal impressions:

- a)* Impression (= 6a, 7a, 8a, 10a, 11a), 17×17mm, of a dome. Inscription in Middle Persian, in lapidary script:
 - in the field, on four lines:
 1. l'wl
 2. [kwst' ZY]
 3. lw[t'b'l]
 4. mgwh
 - in the margin (at 3 h): gd
i.e. *rāwar kust ī rōdbār mowūh //gay*
“*Mowūh* of *Rāwar*, side of the river bank, <province of> *Gay*”.
- b)* At 2h, impression, 7×5mm. Near a string hole. Rooster to right with a waning crescent to the right and another above its head.
- c)* At 5h, impression, 6×4mm, of a rectangular bezel. Wolf to right.
- d)* At 10h, impression, 5×7mm, of a convex bezel. Floral motif with an illegible word, perhaps in lapidary script, in the lower part.
- e)* At 11h, impression, 15×15mm, of a dome (?) (= 10e). Male bust to right. In the margin (4-8h), Middle-Persian inscription, in cursive script: *thm'sp ...*
“*Tahmāsp ...*”.

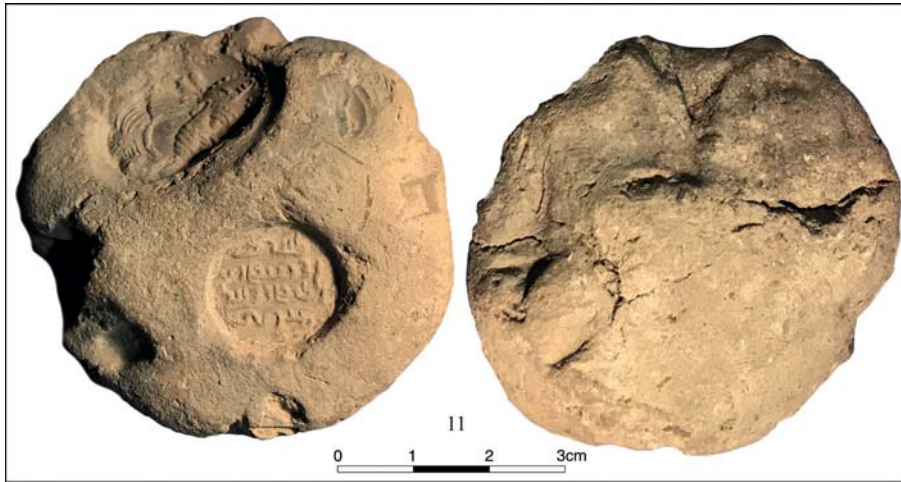


10. TB B33-20

57×54×24mm, 75g, brownish buff. A convex underside with string marks.

Bulla with 2 string holes and 5 seal impressions:

- a)* Impression (= 6a, 7a, 8a, 9a, 11a), 17×17mm, of a dome. Inscription in Middle Persian, in lapidary script:
- in the field, on four lines:
 1. l'wl
 2. kwst' ZY
 3. lwt'b'l
 4. mgwh
 - in the margin (at 3 h): gd
 i.e. *rāwar kust ī rōdbār mowūh //gay*
 “*Mowūh* of *Rāwar*, side of the river bank, <province of> *Gay*”.
- b) At 1h, impression, 6×6mm, of a convex bezel. Indistinct.
- c)* At 3h, impression, 11×10mm, of a convex bezel set in a mount with a broad border. Near a string hole. Crouching stag to right.
- d) At 11h, impression, 7×5mm, of a convex bezel. Indistinct.
- e)* At 12h, impression, 15×15mm, of a dome (?) (= 9e). Male bust to right. In the margin (from 4h to 8h), Middle-Persian inscription, in cursive script: *thm'sp ...* “*Tahmāsp ...*”.



11. TB B44-11

62×60×28mm, 98g, brown. A convex underside with clear string marks.

Bulla with 2 string holes and 6 seal impressions:

a)* Impression (= 6a, 7a, 8a, 9a, 10a), 17×17mm, of a dome. Inscription in Middle Persian, in lapidary script:

– in the field, on four lines:

1. l'wl
2. kwst' ZY
3. lwt'b'l
4. mgwh

– in the margin (at 3 h): gd

i.e. *rāwar kust ī rōdbār mowūh //gay*

“*Mowūh* of *Rāwar*, side of the river bank, <province of> *Gay*”.

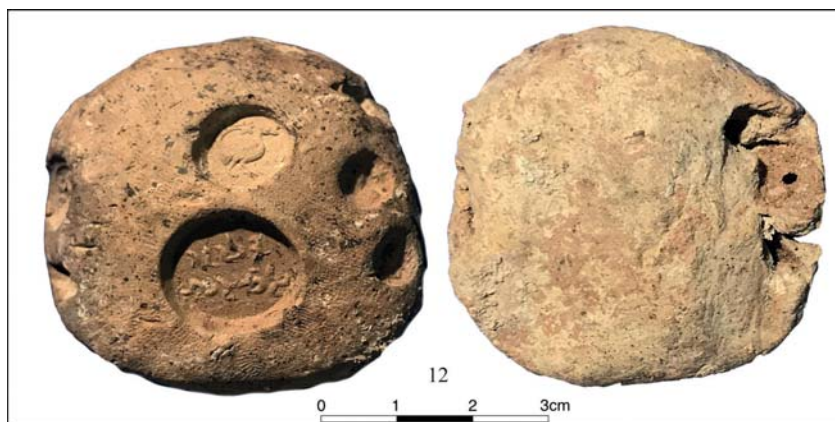
b)* At 1h, impression, 5×7mm, of a convex bezel. Standing naked person with the body depicted in a three-quarter view or en face while holding uncertain object with the left hand and leaning slightly to the left.

c)* At 2h, impression, 2×3mm, of a rectangular bezel. Near a string hole. Bird to right.

d)* At 8h, impression, 4×5mm, of a rectangular bezel. Monogram.

e)* At 10h, a partial impression, 5×3mm, of a convex bezel (?). Near a string hole. Duck (?) to right.

f)* At 11h, impression, 23×30mm, of a convex bezel set in a mount. Bust of a high dignitary to right. In the margin, a completely worn inscription.



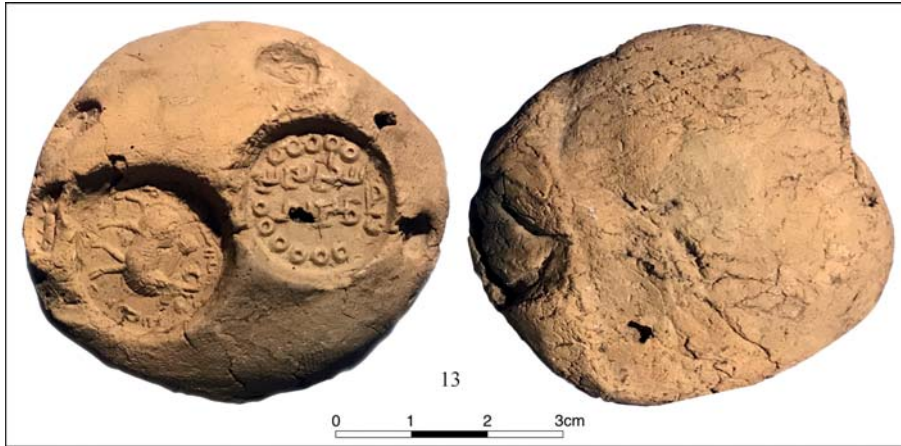
12. TB B47-4

51×48×19mm, 78g, brown. A convex reverse with two lateral string holes.

Bulla with 7 seal impressions:

- a)* Impression, 14×14mm, of a dome. Inscription in Middle Persian, in lapidary script:
 - in the field, on two lines:
 1. klwn'
 2. mgwh
 - in the margin (at 4h): gd
i.e. karūn (?) mowūh //gay
“*Mowūh* of Karūn (?), <province of> Gay”.
- b) At 1h, impression, 4×4mm, of a circular convex bezel. A monogram.
- c) At 2h, impression, 4×4mm, of a convex bezel. Couchant feline (?) with a sun-star symbol above.
- d)* At 3h, impression, 4×4mm, of a cabochon. Bird to right. Behind, in the margin, an illegible word in Middle Persian, in lapidary script.
- e) At 9h, impression, 6×3mm. Indistinct.
- f)* At 10h, impression, 8×8mm, of a convex bezel. Letter monogram.
- g)* At 12h, impression, 4×4mm, of a dome (?). Bird with upswept tail to right.

Province of Īg
Canton of Arōzān (?)



13. TB B33-22

59×53×25mm, 71g, buff with scattered grey marks. A convex underside with string marks.

Bulla with 2 string holes and 6 seal impressions:

- a)* Impression, 19×19mm, of a dome (= 14a = ATb937a⁴). Inscription Middle Persian, in lapidary script:
 - in the field, on two lines:
 1. 'lwc'n (correction by Ph. Gignoux of the previous transliteration 'lnt'n)
 2. mgwh
 - in the margin (4-5h): ygy o o o o o / o o o o o o
i.e. arōzān (transcription by Ph.G.) (?) mowūh // īg (correction by R. Gyselen of the previous transliteration gī)
“*Mowūh* of Arōzān, <province of> Īg (?)”.
- b) At 3h, impression, 4×4mm, of a convex bezel. Indistinct.
- c)* At 8h, impression, 20×20mm, of a dome (?). Beribboned ram to right. In the margin, illegible inscription in Middle Persian (12-2h).
- d) At 8h30, impression, 10×7mm, of a slightly convex bezel. Indistinct.
- e)* At 9h, impression, 8×5mm, of a convex bezel. Duck to left.
- f)* At 11h, impression, 10×7mm, of a convex bezel. Beribboned peacock to left.

⁴ Gyselen 2019: 445.



14. TB B44-12

58×52×22mm, 82g, dark grey. A rather flat underside that is mainly brown with a large scorch mark.

Bulla with 2 lateral string holes and 8 seal impressions:

a)* Impression, 19×19mm, of a dome (= 13a= ATb937a⁵). Inscription in Middle Persian, in lapidary script:

– in the field, on two lines:

1. 'lwc'n (correction by Ph. Gignoux of the previous transliteration 'lnt'n)

2. mgwh

– in the margin (from 4h to 5h): ygy o o o o o / o o o o o o

i.e. arōzān (transcription by Ph.G.) mowūh // īg (correction by R. Gyselen of the previous transliteration gī)

“Mowūh of Arōzān (?), <province of> Īg”.

b)* At 3h, impression, 8×5mm, of a cabochon. In the field, inscription in Middle Persian, in lapidary script: mhw.

c)* At 5h, impression, 6×6mm, of a convex bezel set in a mount. Near a string hole. Couchant lion to right.

d)* At 6h, impression, 8×4mm, of a convex bezel. Near a string hole. Bird with upswept tail to right.

e)* At 8h, impression, 20×20mm, of a dome (?). Beribboned ram walking to right. On breast ring with three beads. In the margin, inscription in Middle Persian, in cursive script (12-2h): wyd(?)gwšnsp' y mgw / y 'blwk'n, i.e. weh(?)-gušnasp ī mow ī abarōgān “Weh-Gušnasp, mow, son of Abarōg”.

f) At 8h30, impression, 5×3mm, of a rectangular bezel. Indistinct.

g) At 10h, impression, 3×3mm, of a convex bezel. Near a string hole. Worn.

h) At 12h, impression, 9×3mm, of a quatrefoil-shape bezel. Indistinct.

⁵ Ibid.

Province of Ohrmazd-Ardašīr
Unidentified canton



15. TB B47-12

24×28×15mm, 21g, brown. A slightly convex reverse.

Fragmentary bulla with 2 fragmentary seal impressions:

- a)* Impression, 20×20mm, of a dome. Inscription in Middle Persian, in lapidary script:
- in the field, on three lines:
 1. (ʾl)th(št)
 2.t
 3. (mgw)h
 - in the margin (8-10 h): ʾwhl(mzd ʾlth)štly
i.e. (... mowūh // ohrmazd-ardašīr
“*Mowūh* of Ardašīr-... (?), <province of> Ohrmazd-Ardašīr”.
- b) At 7h, fragmentary impression, ?×5mm, of a convex bezel. Couchant lion to right.

Province of Weh-Andiyok-Šābuhr
Unidentified canton



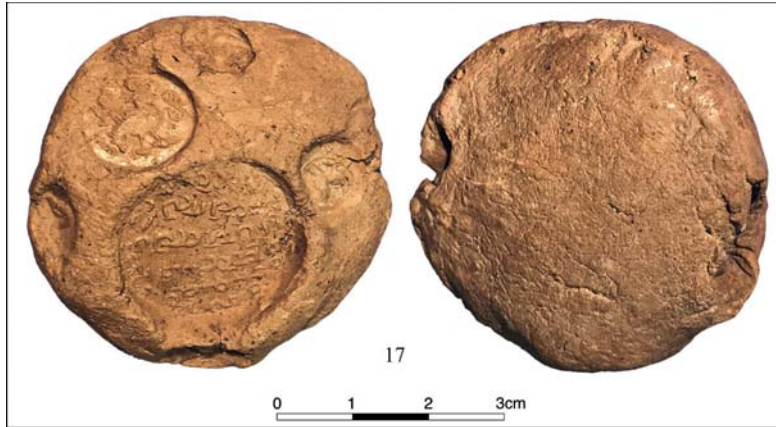
16. TB B16-6

59×57×23mm, 88g, brown with scorch marks. Convex reverse with 2 string marks.

Bulla with 2 string holes and 5 seal impressions:

- a)* Impression, 20×20mm, of a dome. Inscription in Middle Persian, in lapidary script:
 - in the field, on two lines:
 1. 's (...)p
 2. 'nmgwh
 - in the margin (8-10h): [w]h(ʾ)ndywk š(h)pwhl(y)
i.e. ās(..)bān(?) mowūh // weh andiyok šābuhr
“*Mowūh* of Ās(..)bān (?), <province of> Weh-Andiyok-Šābuhr”.
- b)* At 7h, impression, 8×6mm, of a convex bezel set in a mount. Near a string hole. Bird to right.
- c)* At 10h, impression, 15×15mm, of a dome (?). Male bust, full face. Flames around the head and a sun/star symbol to the left. In the margin, from 4h to 12h, inscription in Middle Persian, in cursive script: hwlšytwgšnsp “Xwaršēd-Gušnasp”.
- d) At 11h, impression, 6×4mm, of a convex bezel. Worn.
- e)* At 12h, impression, 3×5mm, of a convex bezel. Bird to right within a vegetal and astral (?) frame.

Unidentified province



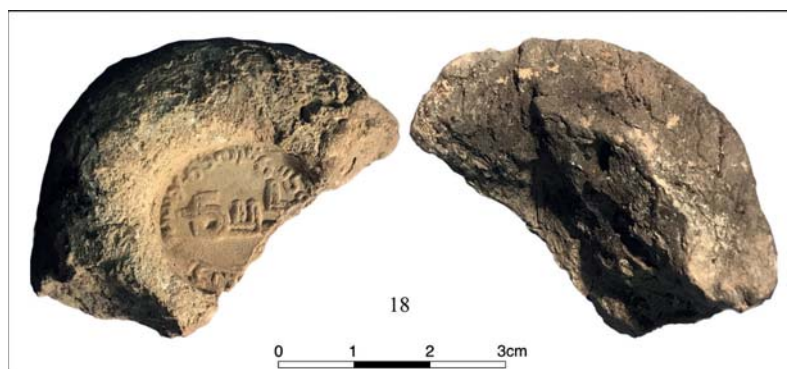
17. TB B6-5

47×46×22mm, 44g, brownish buff. A slightly convex underside.

Bulla with 2 lateral string holes and 6 seal impressions:

- a)* Impression, 24×24mm, of a dome. Inscription in Middle Persian, in lapidary script:
 - in the field, on five (?) lines:
 1. (..m)t'c
 2. (ny?)kwsty
 3. (nkrw)l'’n
 4. l'mdm
 5. mgwh (upside down)
 - in the margin (from 1h (?) to 7h): ..wk...w'wy o o
 i.e. ... kwst ... (?) mowūh // (?)
 “*Mowūh* of ... (?), <province of> ... (?)”.
- b) At 2h, impression, 12×11mm, of a convex bezel set in a mount. Lion to right with head en face.
- c) At 6h, impression, 9×9mm. Ram to right (?).
- d)* At 9h, impression, 10×7mm. Bird to left.
- e)* At 11h, impression, 14×14mm, of a dome. Bird or composite being to right with an S-shape decorative motif to the right and an illegible word (?) at 10 o'clock in the margin.
- f) At 12h, impression, 8×12mm, of a convex bezel. Quadruped to left (?).

Ōstāndār (Governor of an *ōstān*) bullae
Province of Rām-Ohrmazd



18. TB B44-4

49×40×25mm, 36g, light grey with scorch marks, particularly on the underside.

Convex underside (?).

Fragmentary bulla with 1 seal impression:

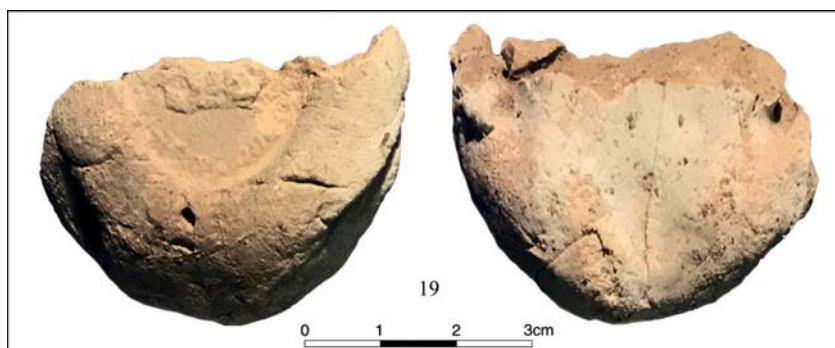
a)* Fragmentary impression, 19×19mm, of a dome (= 19a). Inscription in Middle Persian, in lapidary script:

– in the field: l'm

– in the margin (from 2h to 4h (?)): l'm 'whlmzd 'w(st'n)d'(l) o o o (o o ?)

i.e. rām // rām ohrmazd ōstāndār

“RAM, *ōstāndār* of <the province of> Rām-Ohrmazd”



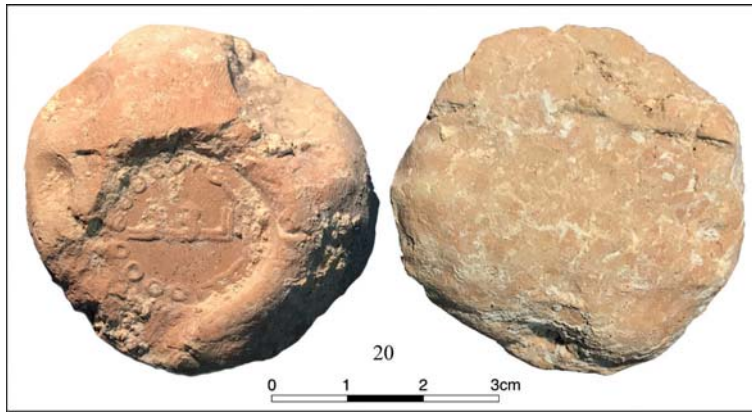
19. TB B43-12

52×33×22mm, 19g, dark buff. A convex underside. Visible string track in the section.

Fragmentary bulla with 2 string holes and 1 seal impression:

- a)* Fragmentary impression, 19×19mm, of a dome (= 18a). Inscription in Middle Persian, in lapidary script:
- in the field: [l'm]
 - in the margin (2-4h (?)): (l'm 'whlmzd 'wst'n)d'l o o o (o o ?)
- i.e. *rām* // *rām ohrmazd ōstāndār*
 “*RĀM*, *ōstāndār* of <the province of> *Rām-Ohrmazd*”

Šahrab (Governor of a *šahr*) bulla
 Province of Gay



20. TB B32-39

47×46×25mm, 38g, brownish buff. A concave reverse with clear string marks.
 Bulla with 2 string holes and 4 seal impressions:

- a)* Impression, 22×22mm, of a dome. Inscription in Middle Persian, in lapidary script:
- in the field: *gdy*
 - in the margin (from 6h to 1h): (*gdy št*)lpy o o o o o o o o o
- i.e. *gay* // *gay šahrab*
 “*Gay*, *šahrab* of <the province of> *Gay*”
- b) At 1h, impression, 14×15mm. Indistinct.
- c) At 9h, impression, 9×5mm, of a convex bezel (?). Stag to right.
- d)* At 10h, impression, 10×10mm, of a convex bezel set in a mount. Three-branched plant with tulip-shaped flowers at its top.

Bullae of unidentified administrations
 Unidentified provinces
 Ērān-...



21. TB B46-20

54×48×21mm, 53g, brownish buff with scattered grey marks. Concave reverse with string marks.

Bulla with 2 lateral string holes and 5 seal impressions:

a)* Impression, 23×25mm, of a dome. Inscription in Middle Persian, in lapidary script:

– in the field, on two lines:

1. 'y

2. l'n

– in the margin (?-?h): ????

i.e. ērān // ???

“Ērān // ?”

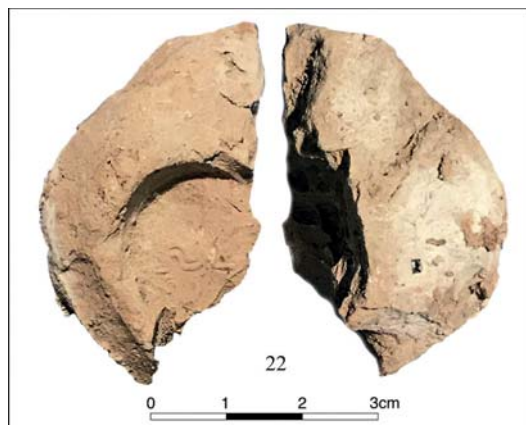
b)* At 5h, impression, 16×14mm, of a convex bezel set in a mount having a broad flat border. Lion's head.

c) At 6h, impression, 8×9mm. Indistinct.

d)* At 8h, impression, 11×9mm, of a bezel set in a mount. Monogram.

e)* At 12h, impression, 8×9mm, of a convex bezel. Standing man with a club (?) held in left hand.

Weh-...



22. TB B46-16

48×30×20mm, 18g, buff. Concave reverse.

Fragmentary bulla with 1 seal impression:

- a)* Fragmentary impression, 21×21mm, of a dome. Inscription in Middle Persian, in lapidary script:
- in the field: wh
 - in the margin, illegible inscription
- i.e. wh // ???
 “Weh ?”

INDICES

1. GLOSSARY OF MIDDLE PERSIAN INSCRIPTIONS ON THE SEALS

Transliteration

a. Toponyms

ʾlwcʾn *Arōzān* (canton): 13a = 14a
 ʾndhwm Andahōm (?) (province?): 1a
 ʾs(..)pʾn (?) *As...bān* (?) (canton): 16a
 ʾwhlmzd ʾlthštr *Ohrmazd-Ardašīr* (province): 5a
 — ʾwhlmzd (ʾlth)štr, 15a — ʾwhl(mzd ʾlt)štly
 gdy *Gay* (province): 2a, 3a — (gdy), 6a — [gd],
 7a = 8a = 9a = 10a = 11a, 12a, 20a
 hlt(ym) *Xradēm* (?) (province?): 1a
 klwnʾ *Karūn* (?) (canton): 12a
 lʾmʾwhlmzd *Rām-Ohrmazd* (province): 18a, 19a
 — (lʾmʾwhlmzd)
 lʾwl kwstʾ ZY lwtʾbʾl *Rāwar-kust-ī-rōdbār* (can-
 ton): 6a — [lʾ]wl [kwstʾ ZY] l[wt]ʾbʾl, 7a
 — lʾwl kwstʾ[ʾ ZY] lwtʾbʾl, 8a — lʾwl [kw]stʾ
 ZY [l]wtʾbʾl, 9a — lʾwl [kwstʾ ZY] lw[tʾbʾl],
 10a, 11a
 whʾndywk šhpwhly *Weh-Andiyok-Šābuhr* (prov-
 ince): 16a — [w]hʾndywk š(h)pwhl(y)
 ygy *Īg* (province): 13a = 14a

b. Abbreviations of toponyms

ʾw AW (for ʾwhlmzd ʾlthštr): 5a
 ʾylʾn AYLAN (for ʾylʾn ...?): 21a
 lʾm RĀM (for lʾmʾwhlmzd): 18a, 19a — [lʾm]
 (w)h (W)H (for wh...?): 22a

c. Names of territorial administrations and titles

ʾmʾlkl *āmārgar*: 1a — (ʾ)mʾ(lkl)
 ʾwstʾndʾl *ōstāndār*: 18a — ʾw(stʾn)dʾ(l), 19a —
 (ʾwstʾn)dʾl
 dlwšʾn yʾtkgwby W dʾtwbly *driyōšān jādaggōw*
ud dādwar: 2a — dl{y}gwšʾn yʾtkgwby
 <W> dʾtwbly(y), 3a — (dl{y}gwšʾn yʾt)
 kgwb(y <W> dʾt)wbly, 4a — (dl{y}gwšʾn
 yʾtk)gwby <W> dʾtwbly(y?), 5a — dlwšʾn
 (yʾtkgw)by <W> dʾt(wbly),
 mgw *mow*: 14e
 mgwh *mowūh*: 6a = 7a = 8a = 9a = 10a = 11a,
 12a, 13a = 14a, 15a — (mgw)h, 16a, 17a
 štlpy *šahrab*: 20a — (št)lpy

d. Proper names

ʾblwkʾn abarōgān: 14e
 ʾtwr... *ādūr*...(?): 6b, 7d, 8e
 bwtmhʾtʾ *būdmāhād*: 5e
 gwlgnʾn *gōrgōnān*: 2b

gwšnsp *gušnasp*: 7d — (gwšn)sp
 hwlšytgwšnsp *xwaršēd-gušnasp*: 16c
 yzdʾndʾt *yazdāndād*: 2b
 thmʾsp ... *tahmāsp* ...: 9e, 10e
 wydgwšnspʾ *weh-gušnasp*: 14e — wyd(?)
 gwšnspʾ

e. Abbreviations

mhp: 2c
 mhw: 14b

f. Other terms

ʾpzwnʾ *abzōn* “Increase”: 2c
 kwsty *kust*: 17a
 kwstʾ *kust*: 6a — [kwstʾ], 7a, 8a — [kw]stʾ, 9a
 — [kwstʾ], 10a, 11a
 lwtʾbʾl *rōdbār*: 6a — l[wt]ʾbʾl, 7a, 8a — [l]
 wtʾbʾl, 9a — lw[tʾbʾl], 10a, 11a
 W *ud*: 1a, 2a = 3a = 4a — <W>, 5a — <W>
 y: 2b, 3b, 5e, 14e
 ZY *ī*: 6a = 7a — [ZY], 8a, 9a — [ZY], 10a =
 11a

Transcription

a. Toponyms

Arōzān (canton): 13a = 14a
 As(...)bān (?) (canton): 16a
 Ērān... (province): 21a
 Gay (province): 2a, 3a, 6a = 7a = 8a = 9a = 10a
 = 11a, 12a, 20a
 Īg (province): 13a = 14a
 Ohrmazd-Ardašīr (province): 5a, 15a
 Rām-Ohrmazd (province): 18a = 19a
 Rāwar-kust-ī-rōdbār (canton): 6a = 7a = 8a = 9a
 = 10a = 11a
 Weh-Andiyok-Šābuhr (province): 16a

b. Abbreviations of toponyms

AW = ō (for Ohrmazd-Ardašīr): 5a
 AYLAN = ērān (for Ērān...?): 21a
 LĀM = rām (for Rām-Ohrmazd): 18a = 19a
 (W)H = weh (for Weh...?): 22a

c. Names of territorial administrations and titles

Āmārgar ‘Accountant / financial officer’: 1a
 Driyōšān-jādaggōw-ud-dādwar ‘Advocate /
 intercessor / attorney and legal expert of the
 poor’: 2a, 3a, 4a, 5a

Mow: 14e

Mowūh 'office of magi': 6a = 7a = 8a = 9a =
10a = 11a, 12a, 13a = 14a, 15a, 16a, 17a

Ōstāndār 'governor of an *ōstān*': 18a, 19a

Šahrab 'governor of a *šahr*': 20a

d. Proper names

Abarōg (father of Weh-Gušnap): 14e

Ādur-... (?): 6b, 7d, 8e

Būd-Māhād: 5e

Görgōn (father of Yazdāndād): 2b

(Gušna)sp: 7d

Tahmāsp: 9e = 10e

Weh(?) -Gušnap (son of Abarōg): 14e

Xwaršēd-Gušnap: 16c

Yazdāndād (son of Görgōn): 2b

e. Others terms

ī (ezafet): 6a = 7a = 8a = 9a = 10a = 11a

kust 'side, direction': 6a = 7a = 8a = 9a = 10a =
11a, 17a

rōdbār 'riverbank': 6a = 7a = 8a = 9a = 10a =
11a

ud 'and': 2a = 3a = 4a = 5a

2. INDEX OF ICONOGRAPHIC MOTIFS ON THE SEALS

The asterisk in front of the seal reference indicates that the seal impression is illustrated in the plates

00A. Aniconographic - Administrative epigraphic:

*1a – *22a

00B. Aniconographic - Epigraphic: *2c, *14b

10. Full-length figure: *11b, *21e

20. Male bust, to right: *2b, 5b, *6b, *8e, *9e,
*10e, *11f

20. Male bust, full face: *16c

30. Animal

Canine: *9c, *8b

Lion: *8f, 12c, *14c, 15b, 17b

Stag: *5e, *6d, *10c, 20c

Ram: 1b (?), *13c, *14e, 17c (?)

Quadruped: 17f

Two quadrupeds: 1d

Bird: goose: *7d

Bird: rooster: *9b

Bird: partridge: *11c, *12d

Bird: peacock: *13f

Bird: duck: *11e, *13e

Bird with upswept tail: *12g, *14d

Bird: 16b, *16e, *17d

Lion's head: 21b

40. Composite being: *17e

50. Floral: *2e, 6c, *9d, *20d

70A. Monogram: 8c, *11d, 12b

70B. Letter monogram: 8d, *12f, *21d

Indistinct: 1c, 2d, 5c, 5d, 7b, 7c, 7e, 10b, 10d,
12e, 16d, 13b, 13d, 14f, 14g, 14h, 20b, 21c

3. CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN FIELD NUMBERS AND NUMBERS OF THE CATALOGUE

TB B6-3 5
TB B6-5 17
TB B16-6 16
TB B19-11 6
TB B27-5 4
TB B30-4 7
TB B32-39 20
TB B33-5 8
TB B33-17 1
TB B33-19 9
TB B33-20 10

TB B33-22 13
TB B39-15 2
TB B43-12 19
TB B44-4 18
TB B44-11 11
TB B44-12 14
TB B46-16 22
TB B46-20 21
TB B46-27 3
TB B47-4 12
TB B47-12 15



Pl. 1a. 00A. Administrative *āmārgar* seals. Scale 2:1.



Pl. 1b. 00A. Administrative *driyōšān-jādaggōw-ud-dādwar* seals. Scale 2:1.



Pl. 2. 00A. Administrative *mowūh* seals. Scale 2:1.

Pl. 3a. 00A. Administrative *mowūh* seals. Scale 2:1.Pl. 3b. 00A. Administrative *ōstāndār* seals. Scale 2:1.



Pl. 4a. 00A. Administrative *šahrab* seal.
Scale 2:1.



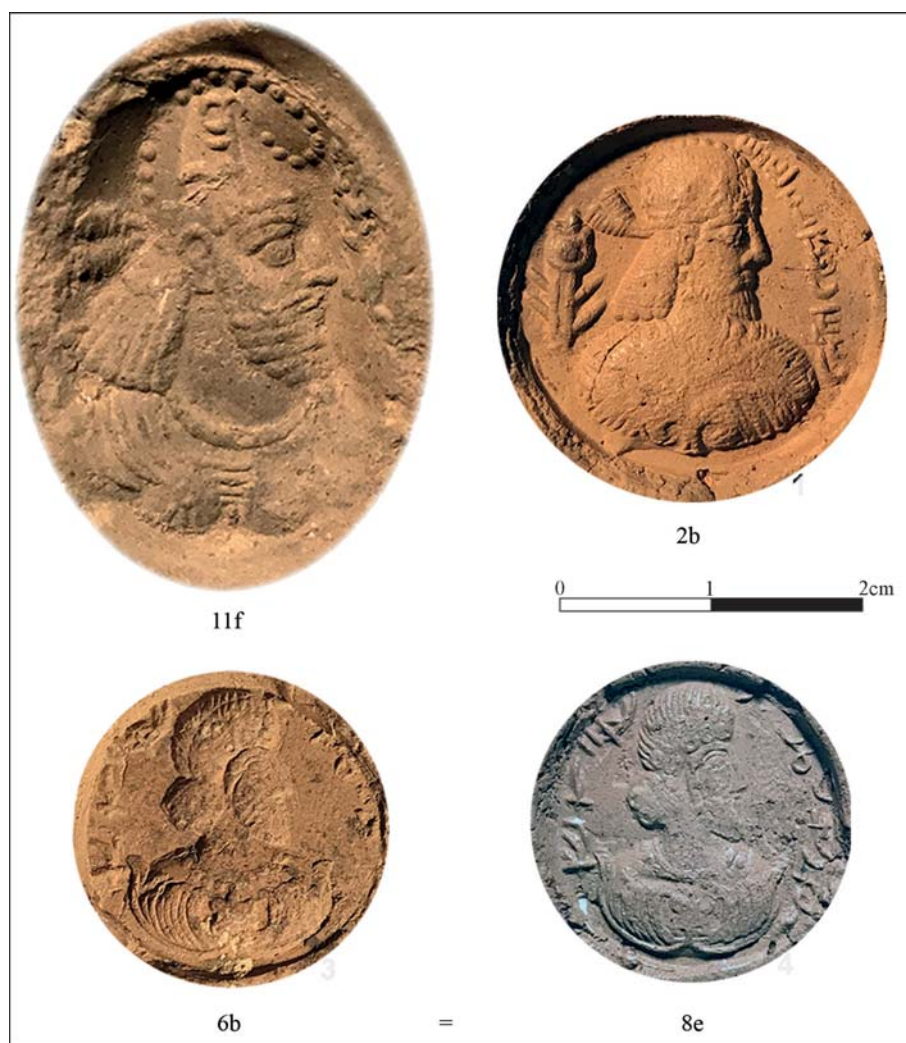
Pl. 4b. 00A. Administrative seals with uncertain administration
and circonscription. Scale 2:1.



Pl. 4c. 00B. Aniconic
personal seals. Scale 2:1.



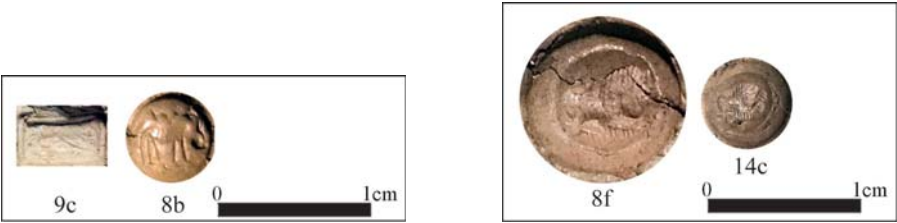
Pl. 5a. 10. Human figure. Scale 2:1.



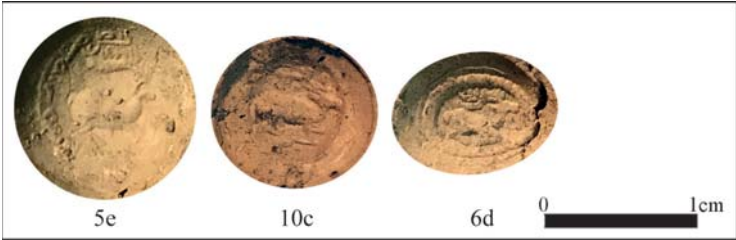
Pl. 5b. Human bust. Scale 2:1.



Pl. 6a. 20. Human bust. Scale 2:1.



Pl. 6b. Canid and lion. Scale 2:1.



Pl. 6c. 30. Stag. Scale 2:1.



Pl. 6d. 30. Ram. Scale 2:1.



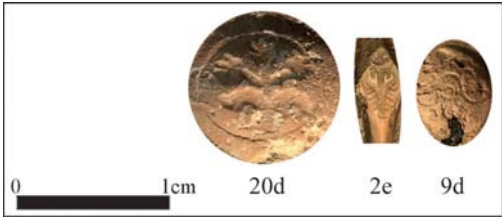
Pl. 7a. 30. Birds. Scale 2:1.



Pl. 7b. 30. Birds. Scale 2:1.



Pl. 7c. 30. Animal head.
Scale 2:1.



Pl. 7d. 50. Natural device. Scale 2:1.



Pl. 7e. 70. Monogram. Scale 2:1.

DARIUS A-T-IL DIT LA VÉRITÉ À BEHISTUN ?

PAR

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Résumé : Sur le relief de Behistun, Darius I^{er} fit graver le récit de sa prise de pouvoir. Selon lui, Bardiya, fils de Cyrus, avait été assassiné, et un certain Gaumāta, prétendant être Bardiya, s'était emparé du trône. Darius raconte avoir tué Gaumāta et récupéré le pouvoir des Achéménides. Ce texte a suscité de nombreux débats parmi les historiens modernes qui mettent en doute la version de Darius. Or, non seulement le récit de Darius s'accorde à certaines versions d'historiens de l'Antiquité, mais il est peu probable que Darius ait menti dans le régime de vérité qui était le sien et au sein duquel le mensonge était perçu comme invalidant toute grâce divine nécessaire à l'exercice de la royauté. En supposant que Darius ait menti sur le plan des faits, on peut émettre l'hypothèse selon laquelle il aurait imposé une version de l'histoire, pas entièrement compatible avec les événements, mais s'accordant de son point de vue au mandat divin qu'il affirmait avoir reçu, faisant des inexactitudes de son récit une forme de « mensonge sacré ».

Mots clés : Behistun, Darius I^{er}, Gaumāta, régime de vérité

Abstract: On the relief of Behistun, Darius I had the story of his coming to power engraved. According to him, Bardiya, Cyrus' son, had been murdered, and a certain Gaumāta, claiming to be Bardiya, had seized the throne. Darius says he killed Gaumāta and regained the power of the Achaemenids. This text has sparked much debate among modern historians who question Darius' version. However, not only does Darius' account agree with some versions of ancient historians, but it is unlikely that Darius lied in his regime of truth, in which lying was perceived as invalidating any divine grace necessary for the exercise of royalty. Even if Darius had lied, it can be hypothesized that Darius imposed a version of history that was not entirely compatible with the historical facts, but that was consistent with his view of the divine mandate he claimed to have received, making the inaccuracies in his account a form of "sacred lie".

Keywords: Behistun, Darius I, Gaumāta, regime of truth

Les Achéménides n'ont pas laissé d'histoire écrite de leur empire et les informations historiques viennent surtout des auteurs grecs de l'Antiquité. Les fouilles ont livré d'innombrables tablettes administratives achéménides, ainsi que des inscriptions royales, mais pas de chroniques constituées, bien que l'on suppose l'existence de traditions narratives de caractère oral. L'inscription de Behistun, dans la province de Kermanshah, constitue, dans le patrimoine archéologique de l'empire achéménide, une exception notoire, qui a alimenté depuis des décennies les débats des historiens. Darius I^{er} y raconte sa prise de pouvoir suite à la révolte de Gaumāta. De nombreux spécialistes ont contesté la véracité des propos de Darius et il serait loisible de retourner en tous sens ce dossier historique. Notre intention n'est pas d'ajouter notre propre analyse historique à celle d'illustres prédécesseurs, mais d'approcher différemment le problème, ou de reposer la question sous un jour à la fois plus élémentaire et plus fondamental. Sans entrer dans les détails historiques de ce dossier, cet article aimerait questionner la véracité de la déclaration du roi achéménide en adoptant une perspective essentiellement culturelle et en évaluant l'inscription de Behistun à l'intérieur de son régime de vérité contemporain.

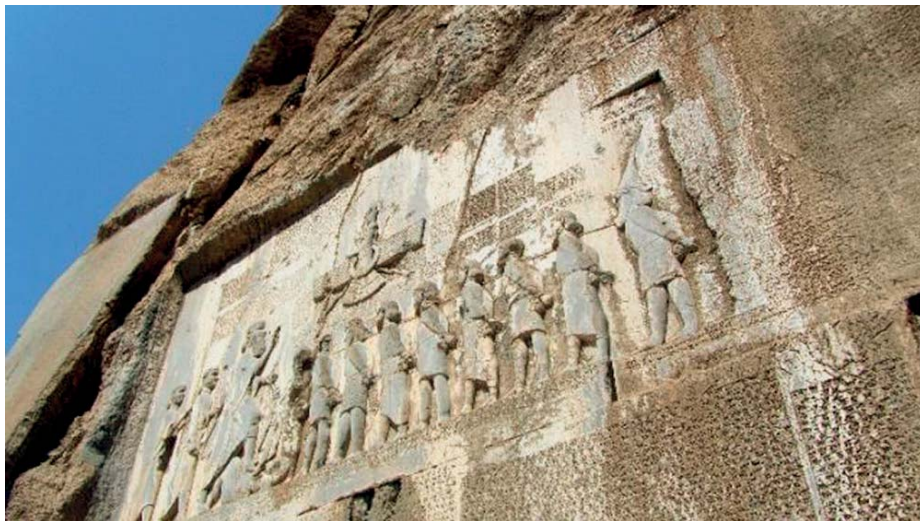
I. L'inscription de Behistun

Gravé haut dans la falaise, au pied d'une montagne majestueuse, sur un site qui a révélé des traces d'occupation depuis l'époque préhistorique, et qui sera encore réinvesti par les Parthes et les Sassanides, le relief de Behistun (aujourd'hui Bisotun ou Bisutun) fut gravé par Darius I^{er} (522-486 av J.-C.) pour raconter sa prise du pouvoir rocambolesque.¹ Rédigée en trois langues (vieux-perse, élamite, babylonien), cette inscription fait état d'un contexte d'usurpation du pouvoir impérial par un imposteur :

[...] Ce Cambyse avait un frère nommé Bardiya ; [...] ensuite, Cambyse tua ce Bardiya. Lorsque Cambyse tua Bardiya, les gens² ignoraient que Bardiya avait été tué. Ensuite, Cambyse alla en Égypte. Quand Cambyse partit en Égypte, les gens se révoltèrent. Par la suite,

¹ Pour le texte de l'inscription, voir Kent 1953 et Schmitt 1991. Pour sa traduction, voir Lecoq 1997.

² Le mot « *kāra* » peut signifier « armée » et « peuple ». Pierre Lecoq l'a traduit par « armée ».



L'inscription de Behistun (520 avant notre ère), entourant un bas-relief montrant le roi achéménide Darius I^{er}, surmonté du disque ailé du dieu Ahuramazdā, dominer les ennemis de l'empire qu'il a vaincu. Photographie de 2015 (source : wikimedia commons).

le mensonge grandit dans le pays, en Médie, en Perse et dans d'autres territoires. Le roi Darius dit : il y avait un Mage nommé Gaumāta. Il se révolta à Paišiyāhuvādā dans une montagne qui s'appelle Arakadriš. En se révoltant, il mentit ainsi aux gens : « Je suis Bardiya, fils de Cyrus, le frère de Cambyse » (DB I : 29-40 ; Lecoq 1997: 189-190).

Ainsi selon Darius, Bardiya, fils de Cyrus, avait été auparavant assassiné discrètement et un certain Gaumāta, prétendant être Bardiya, s'était emparé du trône, et le peuple, l'ayant cru, lui avait obéi en le considérant comme un fils de Cyrus. Il remarque ensuite qu'en rentrant d'Égypte, Cambyse est mort de « sa propre mort » (DB I : 43).³ Il note également une chose importante : « Cette royauté que le Mage Gaumāta enleva à Cambyse, cette royauté appartenait depuis longtemps à notre famille » (DB I : 44-46 ; Lecoq 1997: 191). Il révèle ainsi son intention ; c'est lui

³ *huvamaršiyuš*, voir Lecoq 1997: 190 ; Schmitt 2014: 270 et Stolper 2015. Brust (2018: 148) lit *uvāmaršiyuš*.

qui doit récupérer et rendre le pouvoir et la royauté aux Achéménides. Selon lui :

Il n'y avait aucun homme, ni Perse ni Mède ni personne de notre famille, qui pouvait enlever la royauté à ce Gaumāta le Mage. Les gens le craignaient beaucoup. Il tuait beaucoup de monde, tous ceux qui avaient connu Bardiya jadis. [...] Personne n'osait dire un mot à propos du Mage Gaumāta, jusqu'à ce que j'arrive. Ensuite, j'ai invoqué Ahuramazdā. Ahuramazdā m'a apporté son aide. Dix jours du mois de Bāgayādi étaient passés, alors j'ai tué ce Gaumāta et ses principaux fidèles avec un petit nombre d'hommes. [...] Je lui ai repris la royauté. Je suis devenu roi selon la volonté d'Ahuramazdā. Ahuramazdā m'a octroyé la royauté. (DB I : 48-61 ; Lecoq 1997: 191).

Hérodote a également raconté cet avènement de Darius dans un récit qui rejoint, dans ses grandes lignes, celui du roi achéménide. Il est à noter que dans les deux narrations, le rebelle est un mage qui usurpe l'identité de Bardiya/Smerdis. Hérodote ajoute néanmoins quelques détails. Selon le « père de l'histoire », Smerdis (le nom qu'Hérodote attribue à Bardiya, rival de Cambyse), était au pouvoir, et lorsque Cambyse vit que l'armée lui obéissait, il donna à Préxaspe l'ordre de le tuer discrètement. Lors de la conquête de l'Égypte par Cambyse, ce dernier prit connaissance de la rébellion du mage Smerdis (le Gaumāta du relief de Behistun). Il crut alors que Préxaspe n'avait pas obéi à son ordre, mais ce dernier confirma bien qu'il avait enterré Smerdis (Bardiya) de ses propres mains. Cambyse sauta sur un cheval, mais dans sa hâte, il fit tomber la virole du fourreau qui abritait son glaive et fut blessé à la cuisse : il mourut plus tard de sa blessure. Hérodote (III : 61-67) évoque également l'alliance entre Darius et six parmi les grands, puis le complot de ces sept conjurés pour maîtriser le mage Smerdis, et enfin la prise de pouvoir par Darius. D'autres historiens classiques, comme Justinus (I, 9, 4-11), ont rapporté des versions de cette histoire, rejoignant celle d'Hérodote.

II. Darius a-t-il dit la vérité ?

Parmi les recherches historiques, cet événement a suscité des analyses diverses, et de nombreux iranologues ont considéré les déclarations de Darius comme mensongères, notamment Bickerman & Tadmor (1978), Dandamaev (1976), Sancisi-Weerdenburg (1980), Briant (1996). Ce qui est douteux, selon certains spécialistes, c'est que la date de la mort de Cambyse n'a pas été mentionnée, tandis que, dans le relief de Behistun, les dates des événements sont mentionnées de sorte qu'on peut très bien les convertir en année, mois et jour du calendrier chrétien, et obtenir la date exacte de chaque événement. Par exemple, selon le relief de Behistun, Gaumāta se révolta alors que « 14 jours du mois de Viyaxna étaient passés » (DB I : 37-38 ; Lecoq 1997: 190). Cette date a été convertie, à l'aide des tables babyloniennes, en année chrétienne, ce qui a donné le 11 mars 522 avant J.-C. (Briant 1996: 111). En outre, selon la plupart des iranologues, le récit d'Hérodote, d'après lequel le mage usurpateur porte le même nom que le fils de Cyrus, semble douteux. D'ailleurs, le moment de l'assassinat de Bardiya, dans le récit de Darius, est différent de celui donné par Hérodote. Selon Darius, Bardiya fut assassiné avant l'expédition de Cambyse en Égypte, tandis que selon Hérodote, il fut tué durant l'expédition. Darius n'entre pas dans les détails et ne révèle pas la façon dont, lui-même, a pris connaissance de l'assassinat de Bardiya et du fait que Gaumāta était un usurpateur. C'est notamment à cause de cela qu'on a pu douter des déclarations du roi achéménide.

Ce genre de questionnements a entretenu, pendant des années, le débat entre les historiens. Ils se demandent si un mage usurpateur, homonyme de Bardiya, fils de Cyrus, existait bel et bien, ou bien si Darius n'a pas lui-même tué Bardiya, fils de Cyrus, puis a inventé l'histoire de Gaumāta pour cacher son acte. De nos jours, la majorité des chercheurs, notamment Pierre Briant, incline vers la deuxième hypothèse, sans pour autant détenir des arguments vraiment solides (Briant 1996: 155). Si Briant pense que Darius a inventé l'histoire de Gaumāta, c'est seulement parce qu'il ne trouve pas de preuve solide dans ses déclarations (ce qu'il entend par preuve solide, c'est la concordance complète de ses déclarations avec le récit d'Hérodote), mais il faut dire qu'il ne dispose pas non plus d'éléments probants en ce qui concerne cette dernière hypothèse.

Également méfiant envers la « version des faits » de Darius, John Manuel Cook trouve le secret relatif à la mort de Bardiya invraisemblable :

le fait resta caché pendant trois ans, avant que l'un des compagnons de Darius nommé Préxaspe en ait pris conscience. Cook écrit : « Le récit de l'un de ces sept personnes rend notre génération méfiante, nous qui avons l'habitude de dénoncer des histoires mensongères et des récits officiels sur les coups d'État politiques. » (Cook 1983: 105). Wiesehöfer ne doute pas de l'existence même de Gaumāta, et le reconnaît comme un parent de Cambyse au courant de son acte fratricide. Au moment où Cambyse partit à la conquête de l'Égypte, il était régent mais il profita de l'absence de ce dernier pour s'emparer du trône et entreprit des réformes socio-économique afin de gagner une forme de légitimation au regard du peuple. Wiesehöfer croit néanmoins que Darius est un usurpateur et qu'il a présenté les faits de façon partielle (Wiesehöfer 1978).

Walther Hinz compte parmi les rares iranologues qui ne doutent pas des paroles de Darius et il fait confiance à la « Grande déclaration de Darius au portail d'Asie », la considérant comme un rapport exact de la façon dont il est arrivé au pouvoir (Hinz 1976: 145). Aliyev ne doute pas non plus des déclarations de Darius, et en réponse à ceux qui croient que l'histoire de Gaumāta a été fabriquée par Darius, il écrit :

Il est difficile de croire que Darius ait pris un tel risque et que, sans appartenir à la lignée achéménide, il se soit présenté comme un membre de cette lignée. C'est peu probable qu'il ait inventé cette histoire. C'est également peu probable qu'un récit mensonger puisse faire disparaître une image réelle dans l'esprit des gens [...]. L'hypothèse selon laquelle Darius ait su réduire au silence ses contemporains est presque impossible. Nombre de ses contemporains (Atossa, Artistone, filles de Cyrus et sœurs de Cambyse et Bardiya, qui devinrent plus tard épouses de Darius, Parmys, fille de Bardiya qui devint aussi épouse de Darius et beaucoup d'autres) avaient certainement connaissance des faits. Des auteurs comme Hécátée de Milet, Charon de Lampsaque et Denys d'Halicarnasse, étaient des contemporains de Darius et s'il avait menti, ils auraient compris. En effet, il est difficile d'accepter que Darius ait pu mentir sans pitié face au silence ayant valeur d'acceptation de ses contemporains (Aliyev 2003: 427-428).

En se fondant sur quatre arguments essentiels, Ilya Gershevitch pense de même que la version de Darius est correcte : la ressemblance physique

entre le vrai et le faux Smerdis rendait possible la substitution ; Cambyse a orchestré le meurtre puis la substitution de son frère Smerdis ; nécessaire pour confondre l'usurpateur, la confession de Prexaspes ne semble pas être récusée par Darius, dans la mesure où elle empêchait également que d'autres prétendus Smerdis ne revendiquent le trône ; les trois versions historiques de l'histoire (celles de Ctésias, de Darius et d'Hérodote) sont en définitive compatibles entre elles (Schiena 2008). Compte tenu des documents archéologiques et du contexte socioculturel de l'époque, l'historien Soudavar exclut également le fait que Darius ait menti, et trouve même invraisemblable et tortueuse le raisonnement des historiens modernes qui discrédite sa version des faits (Soudavar 2014: 180-181). Parmi les savants iraniens, on citera également l'analyse de Mohammad-Djavad Mashkour qui, par l'analyse croisée des quatre sources de l'inscription de Behistun et des récits d'Hérodote, Ctésias et Justin, ne doute guère de l'arrivée au pouvoir de Gaumāta et de son règne de sept mois, mais interroge les raisons de la révolte de Gaumāta et ses conséquences. Selon Mashkour, la révolte de Gaumāta n'avait pas pour seul but de remettre le pouvoir aux Mèdes, il poursuivait également des buts religieux. Les réformes socio-économiques de Gaumāta donnent plutôt à croire qu'il faisait partie du clergé zoroastrien et qu'il poursuivait un but analogue à celui que, plus d'un millénaire plus tard, poursuivra Mazdak, sous le règne du roi sassanide Qobad le 1^{er} (488-531). Alors que l'empire sassanide traversait une crise sociale et économique grave, Mazdak, prêtre zoroastrien, se déclara en effet prophète et entendit redistribuer la richesse pour remédier aux troubles : son message influença le roi Qobad I^{er}, qui fit quelques réformes, notamment en diminuant la puissance de l'aristocratie et celle d'un clergé intimement mêlé au pouvoir royal (Mashkour 1971).

Shayegan confirme aussi le récit de Darius et pense que l'histoire de l'arrivée au pouvoir de Gaumāta trouve sa source dans une tradition ancienne de l'Iran et de la Mésopotamie qui n'était pas connue des Grecs : le phénomène dit du « roi substitut ». Selon cette tradition, quand le roi était sujet d'une mauvaise prophétie, on remplaçait le roi de façon symbolique par une autre personne jusqu'à ce que la mésaventure et la mauvaise prophétie s'éloignent du roi. Le cas de Cambyse est sans doute analogue. Il s'inquiétait à cause de son mauvais rêve et croyait que son frère menaçait son règne. Il assassina donc son frère en cachette et présenta Gaumāta comme régent, à la place de Bardiya, durant son séjour en Égypte, ce qui permit à Gaumāta de s'approcher du pouvoir. Ce concept d'un roi substitut

était familier aux yeux des Perses et des Mésopotamiens, mais non des Grecs, si bien qu'en rendre compte demandait d'avantage d'explications pour une audience grecque : les différences entre le rendu grec des événements et le texte de Behistun viendrait de ce décalage de contexte culturel de compréhension (Shayegan 2006).

Majid Tâmé⁴ ne doute pas non plus de la véracité des propos de Darius, et croit qu'à part quelques différences mineures avec d'autres récits écrits un siècle après le relief de Behistun, se basant sur des traditions orales, il n'y a pas de raison fondamentale pour s'opposer au texte de Darius. Par ailleurs, selon lui, étant donné le nombre de fraticides au cours de l'histoire iranienne à l'époque arsacide ou à l'époque sassanide, ou même après l'avènement de l'Islam chez les califes abbassides et dans les dynasties turques, cet acte de substitution est beaucoup plus probable que l'assassinat d'un prince par un autre.

Il est difficile, quoi qu'il en soit, de faire grief à Darius d'avoir gardé le silence sur la mort de Cambyse, car ce dernier est mort avant l'arrivée au pouvoir de Darius. Nous savons que les fondateurs du remarquable système administratif à l'époque achéménide furent, sinon Darius, en tous les cas son ou ses collaborateurs. En tous les cas, toutes les tablettes en écriture élamite trouvées à Persépolis, contenant des informations utiles sur l'organisation administrative royale, appartiennent à l'époque de Darius le Grand et non à une époque antérieure. Comme en témoigne le relief de Behistun, Darius commence à rapporter les événements seulement dès son arrivée au pouvoir, ce qui peut signifier qu'il existait à son époque des archives royales, en tout cas des traditions orales conservant la mémoire des hauts faits et événements marquants de l'empire, et qui auraient nourri la rédaction de l'inscription de Behistun (Briant 1996: 15). Darius ne possédait sans doute pas le récit exact de la mort de Cambyse, et il a donné à écrire en une formule générale ce qu'il a pu entendre sur cette mort en sélectionnant plus ou moins.

III. La déclaration de Darius et son régime de vérité

Partons de cette proposition : et si Darius n'avait tout simplement pas dit la vérité ? Si l'on entend contredire le texte de Behistun en lui opposant

⁴ Spécialiste des langues anciennes de l'Iran. Nous avons recueilli son analyse lors d'un entretien le 24 novembre 2018 à l'université Shahid Beheshti.

les témoignages des écrivains antiques, on pourrait argumenter, sur un plan historique, en disant que les sources grecques ne sont pas toutes absolument fiables. Considérées le plus généralement comme l'un des documents les plus sûrs ou pertinents, les *Histoires* d'Hérodote ont été écrites un siècle après les événements décrits sur l'inscription de Behistun, et la majorité de ses sources était des histoires orales entendues et réunies de diverses régions soumises à l'empire achéménide, et surtout de l'Asie mineure d'où Hérodote était originaire. À notre époque contemporaine, malgré les possibilités considérables de documentation et de corroboration de données, ce qui se dit plusieurs fois, les informations et récits qui circulent en différents milieux humains et culturels, sont sujets au changement et chaque individu raconte une chose vue ou entendue selon sa perception. Comment peut-on exiger alors que, pendant l'Antiquité, tous les événements aient été préservés et transmis avec précision pendant environ cent ans ?

Pour donner une valeur de vérité au texte de Darius I^{er}, on peut néanmoins recourir à d'autres arguments, dont le principal peut se résumer ainsi : est-il concevable que, selon le paradigme de croyance de l'époque, à savoir une vénération de Ahuramazdā et d'une exigence religieuse de véracité, Darius ait pu mentir, se mettant en porte-à-faux radicale et intime avec le régime de vérité de l'époque ? Comme le disait bien Foucault en 1976 :

La vérité n'est pas hors pouvoir ni sans pouvoir (elle n'est pas, malgré un mythe dont il faudrait reprendre l'histoire et les fonctions, la récompense des esprits libres, l'enfant des longues solitudes, le privilège de ceux qui ont su s'affranchir). La vérité est de ce monde ; elle y est produite grâce à de multiples contraintes. Et elle y détient des effets réglés de pouvoir. Chaque société a son régime de vérité, sa « politique générale » de la vérité : c'est-à-dire les types de discours qu'elle accueille et fait fonctionner comme vrais ; les mécanismes et les instances qui permettent de distinguer les énoncés vrais ou faux, la manière dont on sanctionne les uns et les autres ; les techniques et les procédures qui sont valorisées pour l'obtention de la vérité ; le statut de ceux qui ont la charge de dire ce qui fonctionne comme vrai (Foucault 1994: 112).

Certes, Michel Foucault est aussi le fils de son temps, d'une époque de contestation critique, d'une remise en cause du pouvoir du discours et des

discours de pouvoir. Mais l'on retiendra l'idée cardinale que chaque société produit *sa* vérité, en fonction d'un paradigme donné, plus ou moins partagé, et aux effets plus ou moins profonds et transversaux. Or, ce que révèle le texte de Darius à Behistun, ce n'est pas seulement un discours royal, définissant une vérité selon le roi, une « politique de la vérité », mais également un système de croyances qui, dans le VI^e siècle achéménide, détenait une efficace que nous, hommes et femmes d'un XXI^e siècle volontiers agnostique ou laïque, n'imaginons plus guère. De fait, le propos de Foucault ne nous oblige pas seulement à un démaquillage critique de tout discours public et officiel, mais également à nous interroger sans cesse sur notre mentalité, notre vécu, nos idées toutes contemporaines, qui, lorsque nous regardons un passé surtout très ancien, sont toujours susceptibles de brouiller nos perceptions, nos analyses et nos conclusions. Nous modernes, imprégnés des idées de démocratie et de propagande politique, nous ne devons pas oublier que, dans l'Iran de Darius, les idées de surveillance terrestre du chef d'État et de participation du peuple dans le gouvernement n'existaient pas ; que ce que nous appelons propagande politique n'avaient à l'époque guère de sens, que la communication politique – termes du reste éminemment modernes, et donc anachroniques – s'effectuait selon des modes, des règles, et même des rites, qui nous sont radicalement étrangers, à la fois par le temps et l'espace (Sagheb-Far 2010: 71).

Donc, que nous dit le relief de Behistun sur le régime de vérité, à la fois humain, cosmique et métaphysique, dans lequel se place Darius et qu'il convoque ? Dans ce relief, qui fut écrit sur cinq colonnes et 414 lignes en vieux perse, Darius cite 75 fois le nom de Ahuramazdā. Il cite ce nom, qui fut le nom du grand dieu qu'il adorait, dans des phrases telles que : « grâce à Ahuramazdā », « Ahuramazdā m'a accordé la royauté », « Ahuramazdā m'a apporté son soutien ». La répétition du nom du grand dieu montre la croyance solide que Darius avait en lui. Dans le relief de Behistun, Darius nomme les rebellions qui eurent lieu au début de son règne en indiquant bien la date (le jour et le mois), et il précise qu'il obtint la victoire grâce au grand dieu. Il note ensuite : « Ces gens qui se révoltèrent, c'est le mensonge qui les rendit rebelles, si bien qu'ils mentirent au peuple. Alors Ahuramazdā les mit dans ma main et je les traitais comme il me plaisait » (DB IV : 33-36 ; Lecoq 1997: 208).

Darius pense que le mensonge fut à l'origine de la révolte et de la défaite de ces rois. Le mensonge dont il parle est une notion vaste et profonde, qui

révèle au mieux les bases de sa croyance. Le mensonge, dans ce contexte, est l'opposé de l'avestique *aša* (= vérité), le désordre, l'origine mauvaise, le mauvais esprit ; il est ce qui est contraire à la vérité, à l'ordre, à la bonne origine et à l'esprit sacré (*Spənta Mainyu*). C'est là la dualité qui formait la base des croyances des Iraniens de l'Antiquité. Ainsi, selon Darius, les rois rebelles obéissaient au mensonge et il insiste sur le fait qu'il adorait lui-même Ahuramazdā. Il dit dans la cinquième colonne en vieux perse, à propos des rebelles élamites : « Ces Élamites étaient des félons et ils ne vénéraient pas Ahuramazdā ; je vénérerais Ahuramazdā ; grâce à Ahuramazdā, je les traitais ainsi, selon mon plaisir » (DB V : 15-17 ; Lecoq 1997: 213). Il déclare par ailleurs : « Celui qui vénérera Ahuramazdā, la faveur sera pour lui, aussi bien de son vivant qu'après sa mort » (DB V : 18-20 ; Lecoq 1997: 213).

Pour Darius, le mensonge constitue un fléau dont il fallait préserver tout le territoire impérial. Dans la pensée de l'Iran ancien, le mensonge vient de Ahriman, force ténébreuse et maléfique, et est considéré comme l'une des causes de la chute spirituelle et de la perte du *farr* (avestique *xʷarənah*, moyen perse *xwarrah*), c'est-à-dire du don ou de la grâce divins sans lesquels un roi n'est pas un roi et une royauté ne peut durer. Dans la mythologie iranienne, la chute de Mashi et Mashianeh, le premier couple humain, survient à la suite d'un mensonge qui pénétra leur pensée et qui attribuait la création à Ahriman. On en trouve mention dans les textes zoroastriens d'époque sassanide, qui consigne des idées et des rituels autrefois transmis oralement (ou dont la mise par écrit éventuelles a été perdue). Le texte pehlevi du *Bundahišn* nous dit ainsi :

Alors Petyārag (Ahriman) envahit leur pensée et la souilla. Eux [Mashi et Mashianeh] divaguèrent que Ganāg mēnōg [l'esprit du mal] [avait créé] l'eau et les plantes et les moutons [et] autres choses. Cela a été dit : ce mensonge fut prononcé selon la volonté des démons. De ce fait, d'eux [Mashi et Mashianeh], Ganāg mēnōg a fait sienne la première joie. Par ce mensonge ils devinrent iniques. Leur âme reste en enfer jusqu'au corps final [la « résurrection »] (*Bundahišn* 1976: 4, 7-13).

Dans les grands mythes mazdéens, un autre cas célèbre est le roi Djamshid, dont Ferdowsi au XI^e siècle chantera l'histoire dans son *Livre*

des rois.⁵ Ce roi mythique, organisateur et inventeur inépuisable, perd son *farr* à cause de l'orgueil, en raison d'un mensonge qu'il se fait à lui-même. Par exemple dans les *Revâyat* pehlevi nous lisons :

Ohrmazd dit : parmi les créatures j'ai présenté cette religion d'abord à Djam, qui aurait dû être plus sage, mais il s'est mis dans le chemin d'Ahriman et des démons, et dit : j'ai créé l'eau, j'ai créé la terre, j'ai créé les plantes, j'ai créé le soleil, j'ai créé la lune, j'ai créé les étoiles, j'ai créé le ciel, j'ai créé les moutons, j'ai créé les peuples, j'ai créé le monde matériel, – et il mentit de manière à ce qu'on ne pût pas accepter qu'il avait créé, mais lui-même ne sut pas comment il avait créé. À cause de ce mensonge son *xwarrah* et sa royauté lui furent enlevées et son corps fut détruit par les démons (*The Pahlavi Rivâyat* 1913: 101-102).

Ainsi, Darius déclare explicitement que le soutien et la grâce de Ahuramazdā résulte du fait qu'il le vénère et sa déclaration révèle également sa croyance à la vie après la mort. Selon le roi, toutes ses victoires proviennent de la vénération d'Ahuramazdā : « Ahuramazdā m'a apporté son soutien, ainsi que les autres dieux qui existent, parce que je n'étais pas un félon, je n'étais pas un menteur, je n'étais pas un violent,⁶ ni moi ni ma famille ; j'ai agi selon la justice ; je n'ai fait violence ni au faible ni au fort. » (DB IV : 62-65 ; Lecoq 1997: 210-211). Dans le faisceau des croyances à la véracité, à une attitude de vérité, à une norme véridique, prodiguées dans ces lignes, Darius conseille à ses successeurs : « Toi qui plus tard seras roi, l'homme qui est menteur ou celui qui est violent, ne sois pas leur ami, punis-les » (DB IV : 67-69 ; Lecoq 1997: 211).

Tel qu'il apparaît dans l'inscription de Behistun, Darius est un roi qui croyait en la force divine, il suivait l'ordre et la vérité définis selon un paradigme religieux et cosmologique, et il croyait à un futur posthume de l'être. À la lumière de ces croyances, le roi apparaît comme l'être qui entend s'inscrire dans la volonté divine et, plus même, manifester cette dernière. On peut, dans une perspective hypercritique, n'y voir que le portrait flatteur du roi, mais l'on peut bien considérer une telle analyse comme

⁵ On lira le passage dans la traduction de Jules Mohl (Firdousi 1976: I, 52-55) et l'analyse dans Ringgenberg (2009: 67-70).

⁶ Lecoq a traduit le mot « *zūrakara* » par violent : il s'agit plus précisément de forcer violemment quelqu'un à faire quelque chose.

anachronique et – si l'on ose dire – excessivement moderniste : des siècles séparent le temps de Darius du temps – occidental – des Lumières, de Voltaire, de Nietzsche, de Freud, de Foucault, et le risque est toujours de voir le passé avec le regard d'aujourd'hui, en enrégimentant les faits que nous pouvons approximativement connaître dans des concepts – propagande, coup d'État, manipulation politique, etc. – qui appartiennent bien plus à des conditions politiques contemporaines ou en tous les cas à des perceptions modernes du politique. Au contraire, on a toutes les raisons – historiques, anthropologiques, psychologiques mêmes – de penser que son récit n'est pas mensonger, compte tenu du fait qu'à cette époque, bien avant la « laïcité » et l'agnosticisme au sens moderne et occidental des termes, les croyances d'ordre religieux et les symboles n'étaient pas choses prises à la légère, et qu'au contraire, les êtres faisaient corps avec un ensemble d'idées et de rites fondamentaux.

Dans l'Iran ancien, en effet, nous trouvons le concept de roi-prêtre. Le roi était le représentant de Dieu sur terre et il devait bénéficier du *xwarrah* ou *farr*, de la gloire royale, émanant de Dieu, et accordant au roi le mandat royal, le pouvoir, la force, la sagesse (Gnoli 1999). C'est pourquoi les rois devaient être élus parmi les familles royales, et ainsi tout le monde ne pouvait pas être roi. Darius insiste sur son ascendance achéménide et sur la royauté de cette famille au début du relief de Behistun : « Le roi Darius déclare : Mon père est Vištāspa, le père de Vištāspa est Arsamès, le père d'Arsamès est Ariaramnès, le père d'Ariaramnès est Téispès, Le père de Téispès est Achaiménès » (DB I : 4-6 ; Lecoq 1997: 187). Il continue : « depuis longtemps, notre famille a été royale » (DB I : 8 ; Lecoq 1997: 187). On peut conclure que, dans le contexte culturel de l'époque, seul celui qui avait le *xwarrah* royal, pouvait être roi. Le roi, qui est représentant d'Ahuramazdā sur terre et qui possède un don octroyé par la divinité, ne peut transgresser ses principes de croyances et il doit suivre le *aša* (= l'ordre et la droiture). Dans la croyance des Iraniens anciens, la transgression de ces principes menait forcément à la perte du *xwarrah* et, par-là, de la royauté. Darius, pour posséder le *Xwarrah*, ne devait donc pas être souillé par le péché. Or Darius pensait que le mensonge était un fléau pour son pays et pour éviter ce fléau, il déclare, dans un autre relief gravé sous son règne à Persépolis : « qu'Ahuramazdā protège ce peuple de l'armée ennemie, de la famine et du mensonge » (DPd : 18-20 ; Lecoq 1997: 228). Pour sa royauté, pour son âme, Darius aurait-il donc pris le risque de mentir ? Peut-on lui imputer un esprit moderne qui instrumentalise à ce point la vérité et le régime de vérité de son époque pour arranger la réalité pour un strict profit de pouvoir ?

Cela d'autant plus que l'inscription de Behistun relève pratiquement autant de la politique royale que d'un régime sacré. Darius avait consciemment choisi l'endroit pour graver son relief. Behistun ou « Baga-stāna », qui signifie à l'origine « le siège des dieux », était sans doute un lieu déjà doté d'une certaine sacralité. Le relief fut gravé haut sur une falaise, loin des habitations humaines et des voyageurs curieux. Ce qui montre que ce relief n'est pas une œuvre de propagande au sens moderne du terme et que Darius n'avait pas l'intention de légitimer son pouvoir aux yeux du peuple. Il avait l'accord et le soutien des grandes familles perses, il avait réprimé les révoltes qui avaient éclaté en Perse, avec l'aide de ses amis et des commandants de l'armée, et une fois la paix installée dans le pays, il donna l'ordre de graver le relief : après, donc, qu'il ait démontré son pouvoir et ses compétences. Il fit graver son relief pour consacrer dans la pierre une puissance et une légitimité déjà acquise, qui n'étaient plus à conquérir ou à prouver.

Même par rapport aux populations, Darius n'avait pas à rendre compte de ses faits et gestes, même si l'idéologie royale achéménide exigeait du roi des rois qu'il protège et traite bien les peuples sous sa domination. Autrement dit, le roi ne fournissait aucune explication au peuple et le peuple, qui croyait au rôle spirituel du roi, ou du moins qui s'inscrivait dans un paradigme de domination royale au fort charisme, n'exigeait aucune explication de sa part. Contrairement à d'autres contextes politiques, où les dirigeants doivent justifier de leurs actions devant la population ou du moins à l'égard de certaines catégories sociales, le roi iranien n'avait pas à légitimer son règne, dès lors qu'il se sentait investi d'un mandat royal, ou justifier l'assassinat de Bardiya. Darius, en ce sens, n'avait pas besoin de mentir et de fabriquer des histoires, puisque nul n'attendait qu'il se justifie, s'explique, se défende. Roi, il devait s'imposer royalement, et imposer son régime de vérité, correspondant à sa vocation et au système de croyance, religieux et royal, auquel il appartenait.

IV. Régime de vérité ou vérité du régime ?

C'est à travers cette question à la tonalité très moderne que nous voudrions évoquer une autre hypothèse, en tentant de se replacer également dans les mentalités du temps. On pourrait la formuler ainsi : Darius, ou les scribes royaux qui ont rédigé l'inscription plus ou moins sur ordre royal, n'ont pas été fidèles à la vérité factuelle, et ont plus ou moins déformé ou

stylisé la réalité, mais ils ont produit ce que l'on pourrait appeler un « mensonge sacré », c'est-à-dire une vérité fondamentale qui transcende la factualité des événements.

Un épisode de l'Ancien Testament (2 Samuel, XI-XII), et l'analyse qu'en a fait le philosophe Frithjof Schuon, nous a suggéré cette hypothèse : l'histoire de David qui convoite indûment la femme d'un guerrier (Urie) qu'il envoie à la mort pour s'emparer de sa femme, Bethsabée, dont il a un fils, le célèbre Salomon. David se repent d'avoir envoyé Urie à la mort pour jouir de sa femme, et le premier fils né de cette union meurt, car il constitue le fruit d'un outrage aux lois de Yahvé. Le second fils, en revanche, n'est pas frappé du courroux divin et devient au contraire un être exceptionnel qui, d'une certaine manière, et sur un mode exceptionnel, valide ou légitime la transgression des lois exotériques. Schuon écrit :

La façon d'agir de David n'a, de toute évidence, pas été sous tout rapport contraire au Vouloir divin, car Dieu n'a pas seulement « pardonné » à David [...], mais il ne lui a même pas enlevé au préalable Bethsabée, qui fut pourtant la cause et l'objet du péché ; et encore, Dieu n'a non seulement pas enlevé à David cette femme, mais Il a même confirmé leur union en leur faisant don de Salomon ; [...] (Schuon 1979: 65).

Ainsi, dans ce passage de la Bible, le plan divin peut-il casser la morale humaine et les lois religieuses révélées par Dieu pour un intérêt supérieur : la loi exotérique peut être brisée par le haut, c'est-à-dire par Dieu, en vue d'un accomplissement que le respect strict des lois, des convenances, des rapports de force et des configurations humaines, ne permettrait pas. Si l'on applique une telle logique au cas de Darius, on pourrait imaginer que le roi achéménide ait menti, ou du moins ait arrangé et manipulé certains éléments de réalités constatables, mais qu'il l'ait fait en fonction d'un mandat divin, qui l'autorisait subjectivement à transgresser la vérité pour s'imposer dans un contexte qui ne lui était pas favorable au seul plan de son lignage, de sa situation et / ou de sa force. Dans cette hypothèse, Darius aurait menti, ou plutôt n'aurait pas dit toute la vérité au niveau des faits historiques, mais il s'agit, si l'on peut l'exprimer ainsi, d'un « mensonge sacré » : c'est, au point de vue de Darius, la Divinité même qui, au nom d'un intérêt supérieur, aurait « permis » au roi que soit transformée la véracité des faits, et ce qui fut gravé ne fut pas la vérité « historique »,

mais la « vérité » que Ahuramazdā a voulu imposer au nom d'un dessein transcendant les configurations socio-politique et événementielles. Autrement dit, pour le bien de l'Empire, il fallait un mensonge beau et positif, plutôt qu'une vérité funeste et qui aurait mis à mal l'unité et la survivance de l'Empire. De fait, Darius I^{er} fut, après Cyrus II dit le Grand, le plus grand roi achéménide, à la fois grand conquérant, grand constructeur et grand administrateur.

À moins d'une nouvelle découverte documentaire décisive, il est douteux que nous sachions un jour avec certitude ce qui s'est réellement passé lors de la prise du pouvoir par Darius. Nous n'aurons, en tous les cas, jamais accès à la pensée de Darius, et donc nous ne pourrions jamais apprécier sa sincérité et ses relations à la vérité et au mensonge, ni accéder à son sens du destin et à sa conscience des événements. Il est également aisé de juger Darius en fonction de nos expériences modernes de la politique, et de ne voir en lui qu'un « politicien » qui, comme à notre époque de « post-vérité », de crise du discours et d'hypercritique démystificatrice, manipule les faits et les dits au nom de valeurs plus ou moins religieuses, mais pour légitimer des ambitions bien plus terre-à-terre. Certes, mais ce peut être aussi l'illusion de notre mentalité et de notre savoir, de nous voiler le paradigme d'une époque – celle de Darius – où la tromperie existait sans doute tout autant que dans notre temps, mais où les individus s'inscrivaient dans un espace qui n'était pas encore désenchanté comme notre monde actuel, où le sens des mots et des gestes avaient un poids tout autre que dans notre « société de l'information », où mythes et symboles étaient moins vus comme de l'imaginaire que vécus comme des figures opératives du réel.

Quoi qu'il en soit, que Darius s'en soit tenu à la vérité ou à *sa* vérité, ou qu'il ait menti sur certains points, l'inscription de Behistun est moins un texte affichant cette vérité pour l'imposer à tous qu'un texte écrit pour immortaliser un certain ordre des choses. L'iranologue Gnoli note à propos des textes royaux gravés dans la pierre : « Leur vrai et – dirais-je – unique sujet est la souveraineté, la royauté du Grand Roi dispensée par le Grand Dieu, et leurs temps et leur lieu sont en dehors de la règle, de sorte qu'ils semblent destinés aux yeux des dieux plutôt qu'à ceux des hommes » (Gnoli 1985: 61). Dans les textes monumentaux où le roi énonce les fondements de sa légitimité, il écrit en trois langues, dont la sienne (le vieux perse), tandis que les textes de l'administration et de la pratique du pouvoir étaient rédigés dans diverses langues, jamais en langue perse. En d'autres termes, quelle que soit la langue écrite par le roi, ce n'est pas la langue qui

compte, mais la parole royale, qui est conçue comme une réplique, un prolongement, une mise en œuvre de la loi d'Ahuramazdā et comme mise en ordre du monde des hommes au moyen de cette loi, car cette dernière ne se limitait nullement aux rituels mais concernait la totalité de l'univers animé par le combat cosmologique des forces lumineuses et des puissances ténébreuses (Herrenschmidt 1996).

C'est que l'écriture, dans le contexte achéménide et mazdéen, et comme le relève Clarisse Herrenschmidt, avait une puissance magique. « Dans l'écriture, les dieux sont présents, car l'écriture rend visible le langage, comme le langage rend actuel l'inactuel » (Herrenschmidt 1996: 155). À l'époque achéménide, la loi royale a force de loi divine. Dans cette perspective, lorsque Darius inscrit quelque chose, il grave la loi divine. Une fois gravée dans une matière – la pierre – qui représente la réalité physique la plus stable du monde, la parole installe et rayonne comme une vérité pérenne. Mais plus que consigner des informations, le texte « fait être » la parole royale. Pour une culture croyant à la force constructive, magique, réalisatrice, voire transformatrice de la parole, la parole pérennisée en inscription minérale a ainsi une efficacité intrinsèque : elle ordonne et recrée le monde, elle chasse le mensonge, elle instaure la vérité, elle donne sens à la réalité, elle génère même le réel. La parole a une puissance cosmologique et cosmologique. Écrire quelque chose n'est pas seulement communiquer, c'est rendre présent, actif et puissant, le contenu même de la parole, la vérité qu'elle enclot, la réalité qu'elle entend énoncer.

En faisant graver à Behistun le récit de sa prise du pouvoir, Darius n'a pas fait œuvre d'historien mais a créé *sa* réalité royale, qui coïncidait pour lui à un vouloir divin. À notre sens, compte tenu du contexte des croyances de l'époque, il nous semble peu probable que Darius ait menti. Dans l'hypothèse où il aurait consciemment et volontairement menti, on peut penser qu'il se faisait le porte-parole et la manifestation d'un pouvoir suprême, divin, qui seul pouvait, à l'écart ou même contre certaines lois, convenances ou paradigme religieux et socioculturels, imposer un ordre politique à travers un roi divinement élu. Vérité historique ou mensonge, Darius a dans tous les cas dit la vérité : la vérité tout court, celle des témoins de l'époque ou des historiens, ou celle qu'il pensait que son Dieu voulait établir dans l'empire, éventuellement à rebours des faits, des visions et des mémoires des hommes.⁷

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KAVIS IN THE ANCIENT NATIONAL IRANIAN TRADITION

BY

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Abstract: The function of *kavis* and the concept of *kāvya* have been variously treated in Iranian studies, given their diverging paths in Indo-Iranian traditions. The Indo-Iranian myth of *kavi* seems to be inherited from a Proto-Indo-European “insightful” smith in conjunction with dragon slaying. The special knowledge and thus the wondrous power of fashioning the mace for dragon slaying, termed *kāvya*, was expanded to include the power of healing shared with the dragon slayer. From the original myth, the Indian tradition highlights the special knowledge, which obtained a verbal attribute; while the smith function and his product, i.e. the metallic weapon are singled out in the Iranian tradition. This latter association presumably led to the adoption of the title of *kauui* by local chieftains in the Iranian world as early as the Old Avestan period, consequently leading to a dynasty of *kauuis*, known as *Kayāniān* or Kayanids. It is argued that this dynasty, post-dating the Gāthic *kauuis* and having the primordial mythical *kauui* as its eponym, can be historical and the authority behind the first Iranian kingdom in East Iran.

Keywords: Indo-European smith and dragon slaying myths, Indo-Iranian Kavi, Avestan Kauui, Kāva, Kayanids, Ancient Historiography

Introduction

Avestan (Av.) *kauui*- and Vedic *kaví*- point to a Proto-Indo-Iranian (PII) **kavi*-, which we may trace back to the Proto-Indo-European (PIE) Period. In post-Vedic Indic, *kaví*- signifies a kind of poet-priest, which is cognate with the priestly titles of Lydian *kaveś* and Greek (Hesychius) *κοῖης* or *κόης* (Watkins 1995: 88). The term seems to originate from a root **keu*- “see, perceive” as we may compare the Vedic and Greek roots *kū* and *κοέω* “see, perceive” (West 2007: 28; Schwartz 2013: 63). Thus, the PIE word in its origin may represent insightfulness. Nonetheless, based on the fashioner function of the figure *Kāva* (*Kāve*) in the New Persian *Šāh-nāma* and the existence of such a function in Indian tradition, Daryaei (1999: 16) suggests that the PII **kavi*- may have come from the Indo-European verb

**kāu* “to forge” attested in Slavic languages (Pokorny 1959: 535). The problem with such a suggestion is the lack of this root in Indo-Iranian languages. On the other hand, the Indo-Iranian traditions does not have a converging concept of *kauui/kaví*. The Iranian tradition stands in contrast to Vedic and related traditions as Av. *kauui-* and related terms in other Iranian languages associate this title with temporal power (Schwartz 2013). In order to bridge the two traditions to find a common PII root, several scholars proposed hybrid definitions. Oberlies (1998: 410 n. 74) suggests that the PII precedent was a poet-warrior who in Iranian developed a more secular and in Indic a more sacral aspect. The problem with this suggestion is the fact that there is not enough evidence for hybrid attributes in both traditions to support such a PII reconstruction. Jamison proposes that PII **kavi-* was originally, a “word-master associated with royal power”, which later in Vedic tradition became a *puróhita* “chief priest” or “royal chaplain” and amongst Iranian people transformed into a king (Jamison 2007a: 137). This approach may explain the evolution from the PII word into the Vedic meaning, but is insufficient to rationalize its transformation in Iranian languages. As such, there is no reconstruction of PII **kavi-* which satisfies the attestations in both traditions.

Turning to the Iranian tradition, the dynasty of *kauuis* or *kays* in Middle Persian (Mid. Pers.), called *Kayāniān* “Kayanids” in the New Persian (N. Pers.) epic tradition of the *Šāh-nāma*, constitutes the most important part of Iranian legendary history (Yarshater 1983). It is during their dominion that the Iranian identity is laid down opposing their enemies the Turanians (Av. *Tūriias*). Moreover, the arrival of Zaratuštra and the religious war with the Xionians (Av. *xīiaona*) are centered on a second line of *kauuis*. The Middle Persian Mazdean tradition as well as the *Šāh-nāma* and the Perso-Arabic literature link this second line of *kays* with the Achaemenid Great kings all depicted as kings of Iran. A thorough study of Iranian texts led Christensen (1931: 27-35) to regard the Kayanids as a historical pre-Achaemenid local dynasty in East Iran. Following the study of Dumézil (1986) on the affinity of Iranian *Kay Us* and Indian *Kāvyā Uśānas*, the hypothesis of a PII narrative for the Kayanids dominated Iranian scholarship and led to the rejection of their historicity (Kellens 1976: 38-39; Skjærvø 2013a). Dumézil’s study on the subject as part of his second volume of *Mythe et Épopée* (Dumézil 1971) is streamlined toward finding a PIE sorcerer, which is heavily relied on Indian *Uśānas*. Since such a sorcerer has no exact counterpart in other Indo-European subgroups, Dumézil

used the Iranian evidence to establish a PIE antiquity for the Indic figure. Relying on later Indo-Iranian epics, Dumézil found older buried motifs and character traits shared between the king *Kāvus* of the *Šāh-nāma* as well as his Mid. Pers. precedent *Kay Us* / *Kāy Us* and the priest *Kāvya Uśānas* of the *Mahābhārata*. Due to their control of magic powers, he proposed that the original PII figure was a sorcerer who secularized in Iran and brahmanized in India (Dumézil 1971: 176). While the Indian transformation from sorcerer to ritual priest is possible, the Iranian secularization, as Jamison (2007a: 127) noted, requires a greater conceptual leap which Dumézil does not discuss. Nevertheless, relying on Dumézil's arguments, assuming a PII sorcerer background for *Kauui Usan* convinced Iranologists such as Kellens and Skjærvø of dismissal of the Kayanids as a dynasty and consequently supported the rejection of the historicity of *Zaraθuštra*. Thus, the PIE and PII background of **kavi-* and its Iranian evolution is crucial for the study of Iranian tradition.

In what follows, we will first review Indian and Iranian evidence to distinguish characteristics of the PII prototype of **kavi-* and explore the possibility of a PIE inheritance. In doing so, we will pay attention to N. Pers. *Kāva*, Mid. Pers. *Kay Us* / *Kāy Us* and Av. *Kauui Usan* and their roles in Iranian tradition compared to Vedic *Kāvya Uśānā* and later Indic *Kāvya Uśāns*. Lastly, the place of *kauuis* in the ancient Iranian historiography and the possibility of their historicity is investigated.

Kavis in the Indo-Iranian Traditions

In order to find the original meaning of PII **kavi-*, we have to find common traits in the Indo-Iranian traditions, how slim those traits might be. Here we first review relevant Rig Vedic and later Indian evidence and then compare it with Iranian tradition.

It is not entirely clear what a *kaví-* is or does from its numerous attestations in Rig Veda. The later usage of the terms *kaví-* and *kāvya-* convinced a group of scholars to take him as a poet, while others consider him a wise man or seer. The word regularly appears parallel to *vípra-* “inspired (poet)” and *ṛṣi-* “seer” and in association with speech, songs and hidden names. Nonetheless, the context in which some deities are called *kaví* does not necessarily bear a verbal aspect. For instance, in regards to *Varuṇa*, we hear “Let this belonging to the *Āditya kaví*, the independent king, dominate all existing things in its greatness” (RV II.28.1; Jamison & Brereton

2014: 441). In case of Mitra and Varuṇa, it is said that “the two *kavís*, Mitra and Varuṇa, powerfully born, having a wide dwelling place, furnish us effective skill” (RV I.2.9; Jamison & Brereton 2014: 91). This fact is especially clear for Indra, the dragon slayer deity: “He was born as a splitter of strongholds, a youthful *kaví*, possessed of immeasurable power. Indra is the sustainer of every deed, the much-praised wielder of the mace” (RV I.11.4; Jamison & Brereton 2014: 102). His power of smashing seems to be related to *kavís*: “Acting as comrade along with his comrades, the smasher of fortresses broke the firmly fixed fortresses, being a *kaví* along with *kavís*” (RV VI.32.3d; Jamison & Brereton 2014: 817). Likewise, in a verse in which the deity Soma is identified as a *kaví*, we hear of smashing of obstacles: “... the dear *kaví* in his womb, the smasher of obstacles” (RV IX.25.3; Jamison & Brereton 2014: 1258). In the same hymn, Soma is going to Indra with the *kaví*’s *krātu* (RV IX.25.5, see below). Indeed, the general designation *kaví*- itself is associated especially with Indra. In view of the stark divergence between the two branches of Indo-Iranian, we may attempt to find non-verbal aspects of Rig Vedic *kaví*-.

The “powerful generations of *kavís*” are remembered in the Rig Veda: “They as good workers, holding their minds firm, crafted heaven for themselves” (RV III.38.2; Jamison & Brereton 2014: 522). We can deduct from this verse two main characteristics of the original *kavís*: They had firm minds, hence insightful; and they are associated with crafting. In particular, Rig Veda highlights the first quality. *Kavís* are characterized with their *krātu* “knowledge” that permits them to perform their special function (*kavíkrātu*, RV III.2.4). Similarly, Agni is likened to a *kaví* when the discerning quality is involved (RV VIII.84.2). Renou (1953) defines the abstract noun *kāvya*- as “know-how”. This is most descriptive when *kāvya*- is coupled with *kaví*:- “For these two, Indra and Agni, preside amid battle-raids. You two, *kavís* through your *kāvya*, on being asked, realize the visionary thought for the one seeking your companionship” (RV VIII.40.2; Jamison & Brereton 2014: 1109). Interestingly, there is a “cunning” aspect to the concept as we hear Varuṇa’s *māyá*, his “cunning,” when he is called the *kavítama* “the foremost *kaví*” (RV V.85.6; Jamison & Brereton 2014: 768). Even though less pronounced, the crafting attribute of *kavís* is apparent as well. The *kaví* above all others is *Uśánā* in Rig Veda and *Uśánas* in later Indian tradition, known with the epithet *Kāvya*. A symmetrical opposition between *Kāvya Uśánas* and Br̥haspati “lord of formulations” exists in the middle Vedic literature, which is also apparent in the later epic.

Kāvya Uśānas and Br̥haspati are allied to the Asuras and the Devas respectively. As Jamison (2007a) showed, the pairing of the two figures is old, reaching Rig Veda and they are jointly associated with magical practices and spells. Br̥haspati who is the wordsmith *par excellence* in the Rig Veda is called the powerfully roaring *kaví* (RV X.64.4). Now it is interesting to note that his action is described in terms of crafting: “Br̥haspati smelted these (births) like a smith. In the ancient generation of the gods, what exists was born from what does not exist” (RV X.72.2; Jamison & Brereton 2014: 1500). Here we may see an allusion to the power of creation being born from non-existence, which is related to the work of a smith. A rare picture of a smith and his equipment is presented in RV IX.112.2: The “old plants” must be for producing a hot fire, the “feathers of birds” for fanning the flames, and the stones are probably whetstone (Jamison & Brereton 2014: 1363). A similar illustration is depicted for *kavís*: “The *ṛtá*-possessing *kavís*, after observing the non-*ṛtá* again, from there mounted the great paths. They (mounted) the fire, fanned by arms, within the stone” (RV II.24.7; Jamison & Brereton 2014: 453). Thus, the concept of *kaví*- as a craftsman of some sort similar to a smith is present in the Rig Veda.

In order to understand the semantic and functional range of PII **kavi*-, we have to focus on Rig Vedic *Kāvya Uśanā* and *Kāvya Uśānas* of later Indian tradition. The exact shape of the Rig Vedic name is unclear and its various anomalies suggest it is very archaic, which has become grammatically and metrically frozen. Hence, Jamison (2007b) suggests that the mythology of the figure thus named is forgotten and it is preserved only in poorly understood poetic allusion. *Kāvya Uśanā* is usually mentioned in conjunction with Indra with some service to him before his battles (Jamison 2007a: 131). In the myth of the journey of Indra and his client to the house of *Kāvya Uśanā* with the horses of the wind, *Uśanā* calls himself a mortal (RV X.22.6): “You have come from afar, from heaven and earth, to a mortal” (Jamison & Brereton 2014: 1406). In a hymn to Indra, *Uśanā* is said to possess the great weapon (RV V.34.2): “*Uśanā*, possessing the great weapon, held the thousand spiked weapon (out to Indra) to smash the wild beast” (Jamison & Brereton 2014: 700). Rig Veda denotes activity of *Kāvya Uśanā* with the verb *takṣ*- “to fashion”. Thus, *kāvya*- “knowledge” allows him to craft. Rig Veda hints to the fact that *Kāvya Uśanā* is the fashioner of the weapon for Indra: “When *Uśanā* fashions might with might for you [Indra], then your vast power thrusts apart the two worlds with its greatness” (RV I.51.10; Jamison & Brereton 2014: 165). This

verse alludes to the cosmological dimension that the dragon slaying myth, known as *Vṛtra*-smiting, acquired in Indian tradition. The *Vṛtra*-smiting mace of Indra is fashioned by *Kāvyā Uśānas*: “What *Uśānā Kāvyā* gave to you to provide exhilaration, that decisive, *Vṛtra*-smiting mace had he fashioned” (RV I.121.12; Jamison & Brereton 2014: 283). Hence, *Kāvyā Uśānā* appears to be the fashioner of Indra’s mace (see below for an association with the fashioner deity *Tvaṣṭr*).

It might be surprising that the fashioner of the mace, hence a smith, transformed into a wordsmith. We may find the path of such an evolution in the *Vala* myth. In this myth, Indra releases the cows enclosed and concealed in a great cave called *Vala*. As demonstrated by Lincoln (1976) and Watkins (1995), this myth is a transformation of the dragon slaying myth. This is evident where the waters released by Indra’s *Vṛtra*-smiting are likened to the cows (RV I.32.11). In the *Vala* myth, Indra utilizes songs, formulated enigmas and magical spells as his weapons. Br̥haspati is also figuring in the myth with an ambiguous relationship to Indra. It is by Indra’s songs that the imprisoned cows find their bellowing release. One of the means to release the cows is to know and pronounce their “hidden names”. Rig Veda attributes this action to Br̥haspati (RV X.68.7), Angirases (RV IV.1.16, note the Angirasic character of Br̥haspati, Kauś 135.9) and *Kāvyā Uśānā* (RV IX.87.3). The formula used for releasing the cows is elsewhere attributed to *Kāvyā Uśānā* (RV I.83.5). Consequently, Jamison (2007a: 134-136) assumed that Indra’s helper in this myth was originally *Kāvyā Uśānā* and then Br̥haspati superimposed upon and finally ousted him from the myth. Indeed the Rig Vedic identification of *Kāvyā Uśānā* and Br̥haspati can explain the pairing of the two figures in the middle Vedic and epic literature as *Puróhitas* of Asuras and Gods, resulting from a splitting of a once unitary figure, given the evolved Asura/Deva opposition in the post-Rig Vedic period. In view of crafting aspect of original *kavís* and the fact that this aspect is also present in Iranian tradition (see below), we may explain the Rig Vedic parallelism between *Kāvyā Uśānā* and Br̥haspati from a different point of view. The extraordinary magical power of the words is very prominent in the Rig Veda. In this light, we can interpret the *Vala* myth as a reworking of the original dragon slaying myth in which *Kāvyā Uśānā* and Indra are playing their part as they do in the original myth, but the weapon transformed into verbal magic and the smith *Kāvyā Uśānā* turn into a wordsmith, that is Br̥haspati. The double nature of *Kāvyā Uśānā* is clear in a verse where he is introduced by enumeration

of his characteristics: “seer, inspired (poet), going in front of the people, an insightful craftsman [*r̥bhu*], *Uśanā Kāvya*” (RV IX.87.3; Jamison & Brereton 2014: 1326). As such, the Rig Vedic poet compares himself with *kavís*: “like a craftsman, I ponder my inspiration ... I seek *kavís* to see whole” (RV 3.38.1; Jamison & Brereton 2014: 522). Thus, it is possible to think of *kaví* as a knowledgeable technician who could harness magical powers. The venue of the technique was originally crafting the dragon slaying mace and then poems and words.

As the art of forging in its origin and first developments was considered supernal (see below for the PIE background), Proto-Indo-Aryans may have developed a primordial fashioner deity: Vedic *Tvaṣṭr*, the artificer of the gods (cognate with Av. *θwōrəštār*, see Gershevitch 1959: 56, hence a PII development?). “*Tvaṣṭr* knew magic powers, as the best worker of workers, ... now he sharpens the hatchet of good metal with which the ‘(chariot-)steed,’ Brahmanaspati, will hew. Now, *kavís*, sharpen up (that hatchets) that are, the axes with which you carve for the immortal. As knowing ones, create hidden tracks, by which the gods achieved immortality” (RV 10.53.9-10; Jamison & Brereton 2014: 1462). Hence, the fashioner deity taught the primordial *kavís* the art of manufacturing. Then, by transformation of *kavís* into wordsmiths, fashioning the dragon slaying mace is attributed to *Tvaṣṭr* (RV I.32.2; V.31.4; VI.17.10; X.48.3) and the role of *Kāvya Uśanā* in the dragon slaying myth became marginalized.

We now turn to the Iranian tradition for attestations of *kauui-* and its cognate terms in Iranian languages. Due to scarcity of Avestan texts and their religious nature, we will pay attention not only to them and the associated Middle Persian Mazdean literature, but also to New Persian *Šāhnāma* as well as the Iranian oral epic tradition. In doing so, we encounter the problem of chronology; nevertheless, we attempt to find common traits across these various sources that may point to ancient origins.

Some Iranologists such as Kellens (1976) and Skjærvø (2013a) assume that Av. *kauui-* is also a category of priests following the same meaning in the Indian tradition. Nonetheless, the most important contextual fact about Av. *kauui-* and in particular its Gāthic attestations is its strong association with *xšaθra-* “rule, power(ship), dominion”, sometimes translated as “command”, which positions the *kauuis* in the sphere of power. The Indian cognate term *kṣatra-* “rule, authority” is the base for *kṣatriya* that signifies the warriorhood of the social orders in Indian tradition. Kellens explains

the abnormal evolution from his priestly concept of *kauui-* toward temporal power as an epic reconfiguration of Old Iranian myths into a pseudo-history resembling a dynastic chronicle. Schmidt (2003: 357-358) on the other hand argued for a hybrid possibility, meaning that Av. *kauuis* were priest-kings. This notion seems contrary to Avestan evidence, as it contrasts temporal power and priesthood: In the Avestan myth of the primordial king Yima, he does not consent to be the bearer of *daēnā* “religious vision/tradition”, but he accepts *xšaθra* (*Vidēvdād*, 2.4-5; see translation by Skjærvø 2011: 71).

Indeed, as Schwartz (2013: 64) stated, Avesta does not provide evidence for the priestly function of *kauuis*. The word *kauui-* and its associated words occur eight times in the Gāthās, five of which are used in reference to enemies of Zaratuštra. In these instances, *kauuis* are often coupled with sacral authorities, in particular with *karapans*: *karapōtāscā kəuuītāscā* “gang of *karapans* and *kauuis*” (Y 32.15). Such couplings points to interactions of religion and temporal power: *xšaθrāiš yūjēn karapanō kəuuaiiscā* “by their power/dominion, the *karapans* and *kauuis* yoke” (Y 46.11). In view of this coupling, the expression *karapanō ... yācā ... dušəxšθrā daxīunqm* “the *karapans* and the mis-rulers of the lands” (Y. 48.10) is a substitutive designation for the *kauuis*. The association of *kauuis* with *karapan* and *usij* priests involves animal sacrifice and opposition to the Mazdean vision, which can point to their ruling position. Furthermore, when Gāthās mention an individual *kauui-*, the context is patronage closely related to *maga-* “bounty” or “patronly gift of largesse” (Y. 56.13-14; 51.11-12). The relationship between *Kauui Vištaspa* and Zaratuštra is on par with the one that couples *kauuis* and *karapans*. In addition, the term *kəuuīna* with its epithet *vaēpiia* (translated as “sodomite” by Humbach & Faiss 2010: 155, cf. Av. *vaēpaiia-*) is thought to refer to a princeling whose favor Zaratuštra failed to win (Y. 51.12). This assumption provides a contrast to the helpful *Kauui Vištaspa* to whom Zaratuštra is grateful (Y. 51.16). On the other hand, Skjærvø (2013a) compares the epithet with Old Indic *vepī* “inspired” and assumes that it may refer to trembling and shaking in pretended ecstasy. Considering an original meaning for **keu-* “see, perceive” for the PII **kavi-* can explain this Gāthic connection to the word *vepī*, but at the same time does not necessarily lean toward a meaning close to “poetaster”. Hence, as Schwartz (2013: 66) concluded, Gāthic *kauuis* refer to chieftains exerting power over a small territory.

The Young Avestan attestations of *kauui-* are also in-line with the Gāthic ones. The plural form used together with *karpan-* apparently follows the

Gāthic terminology. These two terms are grouped together with sorcerers, witches, false teachers and other evil beings, whose original, literal meanings may no longer have been known. The singular form of *kauui-* is an epithet of a distinct group of temporal authorities. The exploits of *Kauui Vištāspa* and *Kauui Haosrauuah* are indicative of warlike lords (Yt. 19.93 see below, also see discussion by Schmidt 2003: 369-370). Apart from individual *kauuis*, we may seek the concept of Av. *kauui-* in *kauuaēm xʷarənah* “*Kavyan* glory”. In its exalted state, it belongs to Ahura Mazdā (Yt. 19.10-11, following the translation of Humbach & Ichaporia 1998: 30):

yaṭ asti ahurahe mazdā yaθa dāmaṇ daθaṭ ahurō mazdā ... yaṭ kərənauuqṇ frašəm ahūm azarəsəntəm amarəsəntəm afriθiaṇtəm apuiiaṇtəm yauuaējīm yauuaēsūm vasō.xšaθrəm ...

[the *Kavyan* glory] which is of Ahura Mazdā since Ahura Mazdā has created creatures ... in order to make existence brilliant, not aging, imperishable, not rotting, not putrefying, enjoying eternal life, enjoying eternal benefit, enjoying dominion at will ...

The crafting feature of the concept of *kauui* is present here as the *Kavyan* glory gives power of creation. Moreover, through this glory, this creation becomes brilliant, not aging and enjoying power at will. We will get back to the not-aging and eternal attributes that are related to the concept of *kauui*, but for now we may also note again the close association of *Kavyan* glory and *xšaθra-*. In addition, as Schwartz (2013: 67) points out, the personal name *Kauuārasman* (Yt. 13.103) also shows association of *kauuis* with *rasman-* “battle formations”. Summing up, while Avesta associates *kauuis* with *xšaθra-* and they have martial denotation as well, there is no evidence of their priestly function.

In Middle Iranian languages, the martial connotation of the cognate terms shows a linear semantic development of the Old Iranian word. The N. Pers. *kāv* “brave, martial” (Tabrīzī, Borhān-e Qāte’, ed. Mo’in 1979, vol. 3: 1581) goes back to Mid. Pers. *kāw*. In New Persian, Asadi Tusi (ed. Dabirsiāqi 1957: 170) under the entry *kāv* “courageous, tall and fit fighter” cites the usage of *gav* in *Šāh-nāma* (ed. Khaleghi-Motlagh 1987-2008, II: 173). The meaning “hero” is also attested for Mid. Pers. *kay* as it is clear from the phrases *kayān vīrān* (Greater Bundahišn 26.101; 177.10 in Bailey 1933) and *kayān yalān* (Greater Bundahišn, 75.15 in Bailey 1933). *Kāv* may be a borrowing from Parthian heroic literature. The Armenian adoption of *kauui* is *kav*, which goes back to the Arsacid period (Sebeos has

Kav Xosrow for Mid. Pers. *Kay Husrōy*, N. Pers. *Kay Kōsrow*, Av. *Kauui Haosrauuh*; apud Christensen 1925). A Sogdian Kephalaion fragment indicates that Mani identified heroic figures from the Book of *Kāwān* “Giants” with equivalent figures from Iranian legends (Henning 1943: 69-70). In fact, Mani refers to the Book of Giants as the book written for the Parthians (Berlin codex, 1Ke 5.25; ed. Gardner 1995: 11). A Christian Sogdian fragment of Psalm 24 uses the word *kawi* for hero (Sims-Williams 1985: 142, 144, 152). There is also an onomastic trace of the *K̲wārazmian* (Chorasmian) cognate in the name of the general of the *K̲wārazmian* troops of *Kazar* garrison, *Mahmūd ibn Kūy*, whence *K̲wār*. **kūyāw* “of the *K̲wārazmian* people” (Schwartz 2013: 68). In conclusion, the entirety of the Iranian tradition converges on the secular usage of PII **kavi-* in the sense of martial heroes and royals.

How can we reconcile the Iranian and Indian attestations of PII **kavi-*? The difference in significance of *kauui-* and *kaví-* is not the only point of disparity between the two traditions. Condemnation of Av. *daēuua-* stands against veneration of Vedic *devá-*. Rejection of *daēuuas* is known to be the innovation of the Gāthic composer (Gnoli 1980: 73-83; Kellens 2000: 21-22; see Hintze 2013 for change and continuity). Can we understand the *kauui/ kaví* dichotomy in line with the religious transformation that occurred in Iranian tradition? As mentioned above, the temporal usage of *kauui-* is already apparent in the Gāthās, hence we cannot attribute a religious transformation with respect to this term. The only attribute of Gāthic *kauuis* that is in common with Rig Vedic *kavís* is the use of the PII **krātu-* (Av. *xratu-*, Y. 32.14 to which we will return), that is a mental power to design and carry out a plan (see Ahmadi 2014 for a discussion on Av. *xratu-*). The cognate Greek term κρατύς has a dominant martial sense. Even Vedic *krātu-* is also used in relation to heroic achievements (Strunk 1975: 276-283). Thus, the Avestan and Middle Persian texts are inconclusive in finding Indo-Iranian reconciliation. As such, we may turn to the New Persian *Šāh-nāma*, the *Garšāsp-nāma*, the Perso-Arabic literature and the Iranian oral tradition in which the figure of *Kāva* plays a decisive role in the dragon slaying myth.

Kāva is a popular figure in the Iranian folklore. He is the blacksmith in the *Šāh-nāma* who rebels against the dragon turned into the tyrant *Žahhāk* (Av. *Aži Dahāka*) and helps the dragon slayer *Frēdōn* (Av. *Θraētaona*) wrest the kingdom from him (ed. Khaleghi-Motlagh 1987-2008, I: 67-69).

In the myth of Frēdōn as narrated in the Šāh-nāma (ed. Khaleghi-Motlagh 1987-2008, I: 71), he asks for skilled smiths, showing them a design of a bull-headed mace to be forged for dragon slaying. However, contrary to the Šāh-nāma, in the folk versions of the myth, *Kāva* himself is the fashioner of the mace of the dragon slayer (Enjavi 1984, III: 35-36; Afšāri & Madāyeni 1998: 31; see also the discussion by Daryaei 1999). We may attribute the disparity between Šāh-nāma and the folk versions to the fact that Šāh-nāma relies primarily on Xwadāy-nāmag (see most recently Hämeen-Anttila 2018), whose authentication relied on the religious view of Avesta and its Mid. Pers. exegesis in which the figure of *Kāva* is missing. Nonetheless, we can assume that in the original version of Iranian myth, the figure we know by N. Pers. *Kāva* was the smith who fashioned the instrumental mace by which the dragon was slayed.

Kāva seems to be missing not only in the extant Avesta but also in the entire body of Middle Persian Mazdean literature for no good reason. The name may have originated from Av. *kāwyā* (Justi 1895: 160). On the other hand, the Mid. Pers. *Kay Us* has an alternative spelling <k'yws> *Kāy Us* which along with the later N. Pers. form of *Kāvus* continue an older form **Kāvya Usan*- which perfectly matches Old Indic *Kāvya Uśānā* (Skjærvø 2013a). Thus, from an onomastic point of view, *Kāva* of secular oral Iranian tradition and *Kauui Usan/ Kay Us/ Kāy Us* of sacral Mazdean texts are related. Besides, there are some faint traces of association of *Kauui Usan* and Ōraētaona which might have been clear in the eyes of Avestan composers. In the Avestan hymn dedicated to the power of *Vərəθra*-smiṭing, i.e. Bahrām Yašt (Yt. 14), the only mythical figures that are mentioned are *Kauui Usan* and Ōraētaona (Yt. 14.39-40). In the Iranian tradition, the main theme of the dragon slaying myth is laid out in the myth of Ōraētaona slaying Aži Dahāka. There is, however, a seemingly separate myth of an encounter of Frēdōn with hostile Mazana people (Dēnkard IX.21). Following this story, the myth of the expedition of *Kāy Us* to the land of Mazana is narrated (Dēnkard IX.22.4-5; cf. Greater Bundahišn 33.8 where the land is called Šambarān, cf. RV VI.47.2 in which Indra is said to have smashed apart the walls of Śambara) which is elaborated at length in the Šāh-nāma (ed. Khaleghi-Motlagh 1987-2008, III: 1-94). In fact, it seems that the fight with the Mazana people/demons ultimately draws its main motifs from the inherited late-PIE dragon slaying myth, which turned into the fight with aliens (for the evolution of the dragon slaying myth into the fight with aliens, see Lincoln 1976). Even though the

two figures are clearly decoupled in the Middle Persian literature, their stories associated with dragon slaying/fight with aliens bring them close to each other. The association of Ǫraētaona and *Kauui Usan* with the dragon slaying myth makes it possible that the *Kāva* of the secular oral Iranian tradition and Av. *Kauui Usan*, Mid. Pers. *Kay Us* / *Kāy Us* originated from the same mythical figure. As we shall see, in the Young Avestan milieu, this mythical figure acquired royal attributes and came to be regarded as a primordial sovereign. On the other hand, *Kāvya Uśánā* and *Kāva* have similar fashioner functions in association with their respective dragon slayers. Hence, common traits of the PII Proto-type of **kavi* converge in *Kāvya Uśánā*, *Kauui Usan* and *Kāva*.

The Proto-Indo-Iranian Prototype of *Kavi*

There are a number of common traits in the Indo-Iranian tradition from which we may be able to reconstruct a PII prototype of **kavi*. In order to distinguish his characteristics and the original narrative in which this mythical character features, we will piece together the common traits between *Kāvya Uśánā*/ *Uśānas* of the Indian tradition on the one hand and *Kauui Usan*/ *Kāy Us* as well as *Kāva* of the Iranian tradition on the other.

The prototypical **kavi* is the eponymous character for generations of *kavis*. As we saw above, the generations of *kavis* are remembered in the Rig Veda. The adjectival patronymic *Kāvya* for *Uśánā* indicates his eponymous character. In the Iranian tradition, we hear of the Kayanid dynasty as principal *kauuis*; however, the title *kauui*- predates this dynasty. This fact is clear from the very name of the founder of the dynasty: The name *Kauuāta* “*Kauuā-uuāta*” means favorite of the *kauuis* (Humbach & Ichaporia 1998: 145). Then we may wonder who the eponymous *kauui* might have been in Iranian tradition. Bal’ami and a Kurdish verse summary of the Šāh-nāma stress the eponymous character of *Kāva* (Bal’ami, ed. Bahār 1962: 144; Enjavi 1984, I: 319; III: 159). The oral Iranian tradition also gives *Kāva* the epithet *Kāvyāni* (Enjavi 1984, III: 35) which is an adjectival patronymic similar to *Kāvya*. We can also see a similar eponymous attribute to *Kāy Us* (see below). Hence, the Indo-Iranian traditions agree on the existence of a generation of *kavis* with an eponymous *kavi*.

As Dumézil elaborates (1971: 176-196), there are a number of correspondences between narratives of Indian *Kāvya Uśānas* and Iranian *Kay Us*/ *Kāy Us*/ *Kāvus* probably inherited from the PII period, which at some

points may have Indo-European origins. *Uśānas* lives on top of the mythical Mount Sumeru in the middle of the world with his vast wealth and treasures. He has vast magical powers such as power of rejuvenation and aging and resurrection of the dead. The latter ability was used to resurrect the Asuras (counter gods) after their battle. On the other hand, according to Sūdgar Nask (apud Dēnkard 9.22.4; Greater Bundahišn 32), *Kāy Us* constructed a mansion in the midst of the mythical Harā Mountain in the middle of the world. From this fortress, he kept a tight rein on the *dēvs* (counter-gods, Av. *daēuuas*). He has astonishing ability of healing to such extent that the body of a person whose life has departed is brought back to life. Every man enfeebled by old age, whose soul was attuned to bodily suffering, upon reaching the mansion and going quickly all about it had his age fade away and his youth return to him. Thus, we can observe similar attributes for Indian *Kāvya Uśānas* and Iranian *Kāy Us*. However, these similarities appear primarily in late sources; hence, the evolution of each tradition must be taken into account.

The evolution of Rig Vedic *Kāvya Uśānā* into *Kāvya Uśānas* of the Indian epic tradition was briefly outlined in the previous section. As to the evolution of Iranian *Kauui Usan* into *Kay Us/ Kāy Us* of the Middle Persian literature, Christensen (1931: 79-80) noted that the substance of his story is an imitation of Yima's myth. In particular, the mansion of *Kay Us* is similar to Yima's *Vara* (Vedic *Vala*) in which a chosen group of people lives immortal and endowed with youthfulness (Vd. 2). Nonetheless, we can find some clues on the PII roots of *Kauui Usan* from Avestan texts and its related Middle Persian commentary. In the Avestan hymn to the deity of *Vərəθra*-smiting, we hear of *Kauui Usan* seeking a wondrous feather of the mythical bird *vərənjina* who apparently carries him to heaven (*təm vašata kauua usa*, Yt. 14.39; cf. Yt. 5.45. *ərəzifiāt paiti garōišt* where he is on the Eagle Mountain; see further below). As noted above, "feather" was one of the symbolic instruments of a smith. Above all, the Avestan standing epithet of *Kauui Usan* is *aš.varəčah*- "great *varəčah*" (Yt. 5.45; 14.45; Afrīn-i Zardušt 2). The word *varəčah*- means "miraculous and wondrous power" (cf. Mid. Pers. *warzōmand*, from *warz* "miracle", N. Pers. *warj*). *Varəčah*- is also mentioned in the Gāthās in association with the *kauuis* and their *xratu*:- *ahiiā ... ā.hōiθōi nī kāuuaiiascī xratūš nī dadaṭ varəcā hīcā* "the *kauuis* lay their *xratu* and their miraculous powers into its fetter". This Gāthic phrase indicates that the Iranian concept of *kauui* inherited some traits, common with its Indian counterpart. Moreover,

through association of *xratu-* and *varəčah-*, we may consider the possibility of their equivalence and as such note the possible PII connotation of the latter in Iranian tradition. The *kauuis* of the Kayanid dynasty are also called *varəčaŋ^hant-* “endowed with miraculous power”. Hence, possession of *varəčah* is one of the main attributes of *kauuis*. As the primordial *kauui*, *Kauui Usan* had the great *varəčah*, which other *kauuis* aspired to have (Afrīn-i Zardušt 2). Interestingly, the other person who is described with *aš.varəčah-* is *Fraŋrasiian* (Mid. Pers. Frāsiyāv, N. Pers. Afrāsīāb) (Yt. 19.57). Middle Persian literature associates Frāsiyāv with sorcery “Frāsiyāv i Jādūg” (Dēnkard VII.2.68). Hence, it is possible that *varəčah* had originally a magical essence. Thus, *Kauui Usan* similar to his Indian namesake has miraculous powers in a magical way.

Closely associated with *varəčah-* are the qualities *θamnah-* and *yaoxšti-*. The basic meanings of *θamnah-* and *yaoxšti-* are “tension, intensity, attentiveness” and “freshness, purity, ray” (Humbach & Ichaporia 1998: 83). The *Kavyan* glory is thus described: *θamnaŋ^hantəm varəčaŋ^hantəm yaoxštiuuantəm* “intense, miraculous, purifying/health-giving” (Yt. 19.9). When endowed with *Kavyan* glory, these qualities will be obtained. As such, the star Tištrya has these qualities along with *xšaiiamnəm* “ruling powerful” (Yt. 8.49). The words *θamnaŋ^hant-* and *yaoxštiuuant-* are rendered as *pahrēzōmand* “careful” and *kāmagōmand* “successful” by the Middle Persian translation of *Vidēvdād* with regard to the first healer Ǝrita (Vd. 20.1-2; Pahlavi *Vidēvdād*, Anklesaria 1946: 390-391):

kē fradom az mardomān pahrēzōmmandān [...], warzōmandān [dānāgān čiyōn Kayūs], kāmagōmandān [čiyōn Jamšēd “aš.kāmō] ... “(he) who (was) the first of the caretaking mortals [...], of miraculous mortals [wise like Kay Us], of successful mortals [like Jamšēd the most successful]”...

It is considerable that when referring to *warzōmandān*, the exemplary figure is *Kay Us*. Moreover, he is considered as wise; hence, we may see here again the association of *varəčah-* and *xratu-*, even though the latter is absent. Regarding the Avestan figure Ǝrita the first healer, we may note the correspondence with Trita of Indian tradition. Ǝrita was also originally the dragon slayer in Iranian tradition and then by the notion that heroism is a two-generation process, the dragon slayer became Ǝraētaona “son of Ǝrita” (Lincoln, 1976: 48). Yet, the healing attributes of Ǝraētaona

(Yt. 13.131) indicate that originally the dragon slayer had the healing power. It is noteworthy that Trita, the mortal reflection of dragon slayer in Indian tradition is also related to health and well-being (AV 6.113; cf. Tattirīya Samhita 1.8.10). Thus, we can assume that healing attributes are shared between the dragon slayer and the primordial **kavi* in the original PII dragon slaying myth.

In conclusion, we may reconstruct the PII prototype of **kavi* as a technician with the knowledge and art of crafting, in particular fashioning the mace for dragon slaying, who had wondrous powers and abilities among which he shared the extra-ordinary healing power with the dragon slayer. The wondrous power attribute probably originated from the very fact of having the mental power to design weapons and carry out the process of crafting. On the forging function, from Iranian oral tradition, we know that the fashioning of the mace for dragon slaying required special knowledge (Daryaei 1999: 14). *Kāvya* is “know-how”, the knowledge with which the dragon slaying mace was designed and crafted. The special knowledge of crafting the mace is probably the source of attributing wondrous and magical powers to the prototype of **kavi*. On the miraculous and perhaps magical character of the smith, we can see in the myth of *Kāva* in the *Šāhnāma* that his mere presence immobilizes the demonic dragon. This power of the smith is reminiscent of the apotropaic powers of metals (Omidsalar 2013). Furthermore, attributing the imprisonment and chaining of the dragon to *Kāva* in the oral Iranian tradition (e.g. Enjavi 1984, III: 24) may indicate the power of a prototypical smith and his product, i.e. metals. The wondrous power of smiths brings us to explore a possible PIE background to the concept of **kavi* in conjunction with the dragon slaying myth.

The Proto-Indo-European Background

The late-PIE people probably inhabiting the Pontic-Caspian steppes in the fourth millennium B.C.E. had a culture of metallurgy (Anthony 2007; for the discussion on late-PIE homeland see Allentoft et al. 2015; Damgaard et al. 2018; Narasimhan et al. 2019). Paleo-linguistic inference assures the existence of the PIE word **aios-* (Av. *ayah-*; Vedic *āyas-*) for metal, which in practical terms first meant native or melted copper and may predate bronze metallurgy. By the beginning of the early Bronze Age, a local copper center was established in the southern Urals associated with the late-PIE Yamna and Afanasevo cultures (Mallory & Adams 1997: 379-380).

To the importance of crafting, they developed myths and legends. The Indo-European legendary world is full of smith and forge stories. Gods or demons teach man the art of forging the weapons. As shown by da Silva & Tehrani (2016), the basic plot of the tale of “The Smith and the Devil” is stable throughout the Indo-European speaking world from India to Scandinavia: A blacksmith strikes a deal with a malevolent supernatural being (e.g. the Devil, Death, etc.) and exchanges his soul for the power to weld any materials together. He then uses this power to stick the villain to an immovable object to renege on his side of the bargain. As the PII prototype of **kavi* is instrumental in the dragon slaying myth, we may look for smith stories in conjunction with the dragon slaying myth in the Indo-European world.

The dragon slaying myth in the late-PIE milieu was interpreted in terms of the myth of conflict with foreign people over cattle (Lincoln 1976). In Irish legend, we can find this conflict in the decisive battle of *Moytura*, which puts the *Tuatha Dé Dannan* “the folk of the goddess Danu” against the demonic Fomorians (Fomoiri). *Tuatha Dé Dannan* are thought to represent the main deities of pre-Christian Gaelic Ireland (Koch 2006: 1693-1695). In the battle, although their weapons were blunted one day, they were restored the next because Goibniu the smith fashioned them in a special way. Moreover, the dragon slayer Dian Cécht (for the Irish dragon slayer, see the discussion by Shaw 2006: 160-169) along with his offspring cast the mortally wounded warriors into the well of wholeness while chanting spells over the well. The power of the incantation by the well healed the warriors. On the other hand, the Fomorians sent Ruadán “reddish” to spy on the work of the smith Goibniu and the physicians around the well. Then they sent him back to murder Goibniu by a spear. Consequently, Ruadán wounded Goibniu, but Goibniu pulled out the spear, hurled it at Ruadán, and killed him. Then Goibniu went into the well and became whole (Gray 1982: 55-57). Thus, Goibniu has a number of remarkable attributes that not only characterize him as the supreme smith, but also he participates in the battle, acts as a secondary dragon slayer, and is also associated with the well of healing.

There are a number of correspondences between the Irish smith Goibniu and the PII prototype of **kavi* reflected in the legends of *Kāva* and *Kauui Usan/ Kay Us* in the Iranian tradition and *Kāvya Uśanas* in the Indian tradition. Goibniu’s special method of forging is reminiscent of the special knowledge with which *Kāva* fashioned the dragon slaying mace. In

addition, in line with the Irish mythology that Goibniu has heroic attributes in the battle, most oral versions of the dragon slaying myth in Iranian tradition attribute the capture, imprisonment, or killing of the dragon to *Kāva* (e.g. Dustkhwāh 1992). As such, in one version, *Kāva* enchained the dragon by hanging him in a well (Enjavi 1984, II: 306, 313). This folkloric version is parallel with the version of *Ta'ālebī* (Zotenberg 1900: 34), in which *Frēdōn* imprisons the dragon in a well. In a seemingly unrelated story, we find *Trita* in a well: “*Trita*, set down in a well, calls upon the gods for help. *Brhaspati* has heard this, making a broad from narrowness” (RV 1.105.17; Jamison & Brereton 2014: 252). In the version of the myth of *Kāvus*’ expedition to the land of *Mazana* by *Gardīzī*, we find *Kāvus* blinded by inhabitants of *Mazana* and taken captive in a well. Then the ground liver of the alien *Mazana* guardian is used to heal the blindness (ed. *Habībī* 1984: 45-46). Thus, association with the well is another point of similarity. The late-PIE myth of dragon slaying has association and proximity to waters (Wikander 1941: 160 for the Indo-Iranian traditions; Watkins 1995: 452-453 for the Homeric hymn to the Pythian Apollo; Shaw 2006 for the Irish account). It was also thought that waters contain medicinal properties, often shared with plants that are linked with the dragon slayer. The belief that waters and plants have healing properties is a common Indo-Iranian theme (Duchesne-Guillemin 1962: 196). The name of the well in the Irish legend is *Sláine* “health” which is derived from the PIE root **sol-/salw-* “whole, health”. This root is also present in the name of Av. *Haurvatāt* associated with wholeness and health, raising the possibility of a PIE inheritance (Shaw 2006: 177). In the Irish legend, *Goibniu* together with the dragon slayer is associated with the well of wholeness. This association is reminiscent of the health-giving powers of the PII prototypical **kavi*. The relevance of healing power in battle is also a common trait between the Irish and Indo-Iranian traditions. In particular, later Indian tradition credits *Kāvya Uśānas* with the secret of reviving the dead in the battle of gods and demons (van Buitenen 1973: 175-194). There is yet another point of Irish and Indo-Iranian correspondence: The name of *Goibniu*’s foe, *Ruadán*, is cognate with Av. *Raoidīta-* (Vd. 1.2) and Rig Vedic *Rauhina-* (RV I.103.2; II.12.12), an epithet of the dragon. This reddish attribute to the foe/dragon is marginal to the main theme of the dragon slaying myth. However, this attribute may be an allusion to the red metal that is copper (Mid. Pers. *rōd*, O. Ind. *lohá*). Nonetheless, there is not enough evidence to support such an allusion. In conclusion, the Irish and

Indo-Iranian dragon slaying myths allow reconstructing a late-PIE smith myth who participates in the fight mostly by his special knowledge of forging and obtains healing power that is principally an attribute of the dragon slayer.

From the late-PIE smith of the dragon slaying weapon, the Indian tradition highlights the special knowledge of crafting, which obtained a verbal attribute, while the smith function and his product, i.e. the metallic weapon are singled out in Iranian tradition. From the latter attributes, the Iranian concept of *kauui/kay/kāv* emerged.

Kauuis in the Ancient Iranian Historiography

The PII prototype of **kavi* was most probably the fashioner and intellectual owner of the distinctive mace which was decisive in the dragon slaying myth. These attributes were retained in the Iranian epic oral tradition in the figure of *Kāva*. This figure must have been equivalent to Av. *Kauui Usan*. On the other hand, the designation *kauui-* had achieved a martial and royal essence already in Gāthic context and likewise *Kauui Usan* is a primordial sovereign in Young Avesta. In the hymn to Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā, *Kauui Usan* asks her:

*yaθa azəm upəməm xšaθrəm bauuāni, vīspanəm daxīiunəm,
daēuuanəm mašiiānəmca, yāθβəm pairikanəmca, sāθrəm kaoiiəm
karafnəmca* (Yt. 5.46)

Thus, I may become the supreme sovereign over all countries, daēuuas, mortals, sorcerers, witches, (false) teachers, *kauuis* and *karapans*.

The expression “daēuuas, ... *kauuis* and *karapans*” is a Mazdean formula, which is attributed to Zaratuštra (Y. 9.18) and must have been frozen during the transient time between Old and Young Avestan (for theological developments during this transition period see Kellens 1987). This formula is also attributed to primordial mythical kings. Beside this formula, the primordial mythical sovereigns ask for supreme dominion over all countries (Yt. 5.21-26) which is equivalent to ruling over the earth of seven climes (*xšaiiata paiti būmīm haptaiθiiəm*, Yt. 19.26-31).

Avesta and the associated Middle Persian literature imply that *Kauui Usan* / *Kāy Us* was on par with Yima/ Yim and Өraētaona/ Frēdōn.

According to Mēnōg ī xrad (8.27-28), Yim, Frēdōn and *Kāy Us* were created immortal and the evil spirit altered them. Pahlavi Vidēvdād (2.5, Anklesaria 1946: 18) mentions only Yim and *Kāy Us* who became mortal through their own fault. Yim followed the dēvs and claimed to be god (*Pahlavi Rivāyat* 31c1-6; Williams 1990, I: 137, II: 58) and *Kāy Us* tried to conquer heaven (Dēnkard IX.22). Greater Bundahišn (26.4) enlists *Kāy Us* along with primordial kings regarding the glory of kays:

*kayān xwarr ān ī abāg Hōšang ud Yam ud Kāy Us ud abārīg
xwadayān dād ēstēd ud paywand-iz ī kayān aziš raft.*

The glory of kays has been created to belong to Hōšang, Yam, *Kāy Us* and other lords; and the lineage of kays too proceeds from it.

Kauui Usan is then a primordial mythical highest sovereign over all the countries, over the seven climes of the earth, and his sevenfold mansion corresponds to his sovereignty over the seven climes of the earth (Dēnkard VII.1.37; IX.22.4). Moreover, the lineage of the kays seems to be related to *Kāy Us*. Thus, *Kāy Us* is to be regarded as the mythical eponymous *kauui/kay* who was a supreme sovereign.

Taken the evolution of the title *kauui/kāv/kay* in Old and Middle Iranian languages, the title *kauui/kay* seems to point to a group with martial/heroic attributes, among which a royal dynasty appeared (see below on the dynasty). On the other hand, as Skjærvø (2013b) urges, neither Av. *kauui*-, nor Mid. Pers. *kay* is used for *dañhupaiti/dahībed* “lord of the land” or *šāh* “king”. Then the question is how a PII title related to a knowledgeable craftsman acquired a martial/heroic connotation. The path for such an evolution is actually straightforward: The designers and intellectual owners of the metal weapons were ultimately turned into warriors. The concept of *kāvya* is the knowledge to design the weapons in this respect. This knowledge was crucial to the story that in the *Šāh-nāma* version of the dragon slaying myth, in which the role of *Kāva* is undermined, the design of the mace was attributed to Frēdōn, given to the smiths to be crafted. It is important to note that the PII **kavi* was not merely a smith; rather he had the mental power to design and craft the decisive weapon. In the *Šāh-nāma* version, we may see that the dragon slayer acquired the role of PII **kavi*.

The dragon slaying mace, which the primordial *kauui* presumably crafted, plays a crucial role in the national Iranian legendary history. The religious-national Iranian savior will appear (Yt. 19.92-93):

92 ... *vazrəm vaējō yim vārəθr̥nim yim barəṭ taxmō θraētaonō yaṭ ažiš dahākō jaini*;

93-*yim barəṭ fraṇrase turō yaṭ druuå zainigāuš jaini yim barəṭ kauua haosrauua yaṭ turō jaini fraṇrase yim barəṭ kauua vištāspō arəna haēnaiiā čaēšəmnō...*

92 ... brandishing the triumphant mace which brave Θraētaona wielded when Aži Dahāka was slain,

93 which Fraṇrasiian the Tura wielded when deceitful Zainigāuš was slain, which *Kauui Haosrauua* wielded when Fraṇrasiian the Tura was slain, which *Kauui Vištāspa* wielded when claiming from the enemy army ...

It is evident that the mace has strong association with heroic warriors and in particular with two prominent *kauuis*. Interestingly, *Fraṇrasiian* is also said to be a possessor of the miraculous mace. One may wonder if his epithet, shared with *Kauui Usan*, may have played a role in this matter. In conclusion, it is possible that the *kauuis* emerged as warriors due to their association with the mace.

As discussed above, there is a strong association between *kauuis* and *xšaθra-*. On the other hand, there is a strong association of *xšaθra-* with metals. In some Young Avestan texts, *Xšaθra Vairiia* (Mid. Pers. *Šahrewar*) is another word for metal (e.g. *karšasciṭ frakārāiōiš tiyra xšaθra vairiio* Vd. 9.10; *xšaθrāi vairiiaṭ pairi.karəm pairi kārāiōiš* Vd. 17.6). An important instance for our discussion is the phrase *hukərəta upairispātā aka bastəm xšaθrəm vairīm* “well-made shaft by means of a metal hook” (Yt. 10.125, Gershevitch 1959: 134-135). We may compare this example with RV 10.53.9-10 in which the hatchet of good metal is linked with *kavīs* (see above). The connection of *Šahrewar* with metal is explicit in Bundahišn (26.57):

kē xšaθrawar gōwēd kē wizārd šahrēdārīh pad kāmāg ēd rāy čē-š gētēh hast ayōšust xwēš hamāg kāmāg-xwadāyīh ōzōmandīh ud kāmāg-rawāgīh ud passox-guftārīh pad zēn awzār šāyēd kardan

There is one who calls it *xšaθrawar(ya)*, which is interpreted as ruler-ship at will. For this reason, because metal is its own material, one is able to exercise autonomy, power, success, and responsiveness by means of weapons.

We can assume that the association of *xšaθra-* with metals had been already made by the Old Avestan period. This association, however, is implicit, given the attested association of other Aməsa Spəntas with the heptad of creations (Boyce 1989). According to Greater Bundahišn (3.16), during the creation, Šahrewar (Av. *Xšaθra Vairiia*) took metal derived from the sky as his creation. As Zaehner (1956: 32-33) pointed out, in the Avestan milieu the sky is said to be of metal (Yt. 13.2); hence *xšaθra* as lord of metals was also lord of the sky, which was considered a crystal (sky as the hardest stone, Y. 30.5), believed to be both a stone and a metal. Thus, as early as the Old Iranian era, *xšaθra-* was associated with *kauuis* on one hand and with metals on the other. Such an interconnection may explain how the PIE **kavi-* evolved into martial/heroic/royal Iranian *kauui-*.

The *kauuis* play a prominent role in the legendary national history of ancient Iran. The Avesta and the later Iranian tradition depict a national Iranian legendary history infused with mythical primordial figures. Frawardin Yašt may include an early version of this narrative in a special section (for text, translation and commentary see Malandra 1971). Here Yima is the proto-type of kingship *par excellence*, followed by the dragon slayer Ōraētaona. Along with Ōraētaona, a number of primeval mythical figures are named: Oašnara (with the epithet Av. *Pouro-Jira* “full of knowledge”; M. Pers. *Ošnar* connected to *Kay Us*, Dēnkard VII.36-37; Greater Bundahišn 33.8; note his “knowledge” attribute which he probably shared with *Kay Us*); Uzauua son of Tumaspa, heroic Aγraēraθa and finally Manuš-čiθra “of the lineage of *Manu” son of Airiya (Yt. 13.130-138). Then in a dynastic fashion, a series of *kauuis* are named (Yt. 13.132): *Kauui Kauuāta*, *Kauui Aipi.vahu*, *Kauui Usađan*, *Kauui Aršan*, *Kauui Pisinah*, *Kauui Biiaršan*, *Kauui Siiāuuaršan* and *Kauui Haosrauuh* (henceforth Kayanid dynasty). A number of stanzas in their praise (Yt. 13.133-135) follows:

133 *amaheca paiti hutāštahe vərəθraγnaheca paiti ahuraδātahe
vanaiñtīāsca paiti uparatātō saγhasca paiti husastaiiā saγhasca
paiti amuiiamnaiiā saγhasca paiti auuanəmnaiiā haθrauuataheca
paiti haməraθanqm*

134 *druuaheca paiti aojaŋoō xʷarənaγhasca paiti mazdaδātahe
tanuiiāsca paiti druuatātōt āsnaiiāsca paiti vaŋhuiiā frazañtōiš*

*daŋraiiā viiāxaniiā xšōiθniiō spitidōiθraiiā aqzō.būjō huiīraiiā
huzantūš paiti aparaiia viiarəθiiaia vahištahe aṇhəuš*

135 *xšaθraheca paiti bānumatō darəyaiiāasca paiti darəyo.jītōiš
vīspanqmca paiti aiiaptanqm vīspanqmca paiti baēšazanqm
paitištātē yāθβqm pairikanqmca sāθraqm kaoiiqm karafnqmca
paitištātē sāstō.karštahe tbaēšəṇhō.*

133 for well-shaped impetuousness/strength and for Ahura-created victorious-ness and for overcoming superiority and for well-formulated order and for unalterable/unshakable order and for irresistible order and for defeating opponents instantly.

134 and for healthy strength and for Mazdā-created glory and for bodily health and for noble/legitimate, good, able/skilled, eloquent, fair/majestic, clear-eyed progeny saved from trouble/distress, being valiant, and well-acquainted with the future of the best Existence,

135 for luminous dominion and for long-lasting life and for all boons and for all cures, for the resistance against sorcerers and witches, (false) teachers, *kauuis* and *karapans*, for the resistance of hostility done by (false) teachers.

Zamyād Yašt (Yt. 19.72-76) treats the dynasty from *Kauui Kauuāta* to *Kauui Siiāuuaršan* together, while praising *Kauui Haosrauuh* in a separate section. First concerning the dynasty up to *Kauui Siiāuuaršan* we hear:

72 *yaṭ bāun vīspe aurua vīspe taxma vīspe θamnaṇhuṇta vīspe
varəčəṇhuṇta vīspe yaoxštiuuāṇta vīspe darši.kaire kauue*

So that all of them became valiant, all of them firm/steady, all of them intense/attentive, all of them miraculous, all of them health-giving, all of them boldly acting *kauuis* (of lineage of *kauuis*).

Then specifically for *Kauui Haosrauuh*, similar phrases to that of Fravardin Yašt follows:

74 *yaṭ upaṇhačəṭ kauuaēm haosrauuaṇhəm* {=Yt. 13.133}

75 {=Yt.13.134}

76 {=Yt.13.135 *xšaθraheca paiti bānumatō darəyaiiāasca paiti
darəyo.jītōiš vīspanqmca paiti aiiaptanqm vīspanqmca paiti
baēšazanqm*}

Comparing the relevant stanzas of Frawardin and Zamyād Yašt reveals that the eulogy is specifically directed to *Kauui Haosrauuah*. In particular, references to his strength, victory, superiority, defeating opponents and specially his luminous dominion make it clear we are dealing with a king. Moreover, Frawardin Yašt adds the Mazdean formula discussed above (it is clear that Frawardin Yašt belongs to the generations of Mazdean priests; as such, attributing this formula may be regarded as attributing religious power to the sovereign, similar to the primordial kings; also Yt. 5.50). In Zamyād Yašt, the Kayanids are the direct objects of the *Kavyan* glory, which endows them with a number of high valued qualities such as attentiveness, miraculous power and health. The *kauuis* of Kayanid dynasty are listed in a specific order and are firmly associated with each other (Yt. 13, 19; *Haosrauuah*'s filial revenge for his father *Siiānuaršan* is expressed by the term *puθrō.kaēna* Yt. 19.77). The fixed arrangement of the names of these eight *kauuis* speaks in favor of a dynasty that is elaborated in Middle Persian Mazdean literature and Iranian epic tradition. As Afkande (2019: 406) noted, the fact that these *kauuis* are not distinguished personally, except *Haosrauuah*, but only as a dynasty can be taken that the whole notion of them as a dynasty is what is being celebrated here.

An important distinction, often neglected, is to be made between two names *Usan*- (nominative singular *Usa*; Yt. 5.43; Yt. 14.39; Az. 2) and *Usaḍan*- in genitive singular (Yt. 13.132) and accusative singular *Usaḍanəm*- (Yt. 19.71). The name *Usaḍan*, attested elsewhere in the Avesta (Yt. 13.121), not having any Indian equivalent, is an Iranian name (Hintze 1994: 39 proposes an association with Mount **Usaḍā*). The other attestation of *Usaḍan* indicates that the names *Usaḍan* and *Usan* are both correct and refer to different persons. Indeed, there are conflicts in the character of *Kāy Us*/ *Kay Us*/ *Kāvūs* in Middle and New Persian texts: While he is praised as an able king *par excellence* with miraculous healing powers, he is also depicted as ill-advised, cowardly, and suspicious who worsens conditions with his foolishness. An important case in point is *Kāy Us*' fate in his heavenly journey. According to Sūdgar Nask (apud Dēnkard IX.22.5-12), the demon of wrath came to *Kāy Us*, approving his death, making him wretched in his mind about his great sovereignty over the seven climes and causing him to long for the sovereignty of the heaven. As such, *Kāy Us* was engaged in opposing and molesting the sacred beings. With an army of demons and evildoers, *Kāy Us* launches himself from the Peak of Harā Mountain up to the last frontier between darkness and the celestial light.

When Nēryōsang, the promoter of the world, was about to smite him, the unborn *Husrōy*, associated with *Kāy Us*, asks Nēryōsang not to smite him; because owing to this man through his progeny, I shall be born. On these words, *Kāy Us* thereby became discreet. Christensen (1931: 123-124) concluded that the conflict of late traditions is a product of two points of view: the national view highlights his cowardice and greed and the Mazdean view honors him as protector of Mazdean faith. However, it seems there were two figures, one is glorified and one is criticized, whose functions are intertwined and indistinguishable in the post-Avestan Iranian tradition.

Kauui Usan must have been known to be the mythical eponym of the Kayanid dynasty. The myth of his heavenly journey specifically highlights this eponymous character. As the mythical eponym of the Kayanid dynasty, it is expected that *Kauui Usan* be called before *Kauui Haosrauuah* and *Kauui Haosrauuah* asks the very same boon, symbolically, that the eponym asks (Yt. 5.45-50). The explicit supreme power attribute of primordial *Kauui Usan* might have resulted from his eponymous role for the Kayanid dynasty. Nonetheless, the Mazdean viewpoint deemed the Pre-Zaraθuštrian *Kauui Usan* with magical attributes out of favor. The title *ašauuan* “aligned with cosmic order/righteous” given to the Kayanid dynasty in Frawardin Yašt (13.132) is a Mazdean epithet. This epithet along with the fact that the Kayanid dynasty is venerated, including *Kauui Usađan*, separates *Kay Us/ Kāy Us/ Kauui Usan* from the Kayanid dynasty who is sinful perhaps due to his magical attributes and is only tolerated as far as his eponymous character is concerned. Still, the Middle Persian Mazdean literature confuses *Kauui Usađan* and *Kauui Usan* to be the same person. As such, the popular stories regarding *Kāy Us* permeated into Dēnkard, Pahlavi Rivāyat and then Šāh-nāma within the Kayanid Dynasty. As far as the reason for this confusion is concerned, we may recall the similarity of *Fraŋrasiian*’s epithet with that of *Kauui Usan*. While *Fraŋrasiian* belonged to the timeline of Kayanid dynasty and probably with *Kauui Usađan*, it is possible that in order to balance the sorcery of the Turanian enemy by an Iranian counterpart, given the similarity of the names *Usan* and *Usađan*, the two are identified as one (cf. Afkande 2019). The stories of Kayanid dynasty as narrated in the Šāh-nāma utilize the old Indo-European epigraphy with some distinguishable details (Davidson 2006). However, as Dumézil (1986: 94-95) noted, these stories could have been added to the Kayanid circle as late as the Sasanian period when a religious-national historiography was at work (see Daryaee 2006 for the Sasanian historiography). It is

quite possible that older epigraphical elements of *Kauui Usan* were confused for a member of the Kayanid dynasty. As such, a new layer in the evolution of the tradition must have occurred in which the story of *Kauui Usađan* was imitated of the story of the mythical *Kauui Usan*. We may then conclude that *Kauui Usan* belongs to the inherited realm of PII myths whom an Iranian dynasty, i.e. the Kayanids, could have taken as their mythical eponym.

Decoupling the two confused figures, *Kauui Usan* and *Kauui Usađan*, brings us to the question of the possible historicity of Kayanid dynasty. Initially Christensen (1931: 27-35) made a case in the first half of the 20th century for the historicity of the Kayanids. If we set aside the adventures of *Kāy Us* and treat him similar to primordial sovereigns, Christensen's points become sound: the Kayanid dynasty's accomplishments are human exploits in contrast to early primordial mythical kings and the age of the Kayanid dynasty is the first heroic age of the ancient Iranians. Yet the dominant view of current scholarship, following Dumézil's conclusions, regard the mythical nature of Kayanids as obvious and extend this nature to *Zaraθuštra* and his patron *Kauui Vištāspa* (Skjærvø 2013d). In what follows, I attempt to show that in their own respect and not in connection with *Kauui Vištāspa* and his circle, the Kayanid dynasty may claim their place in the early historical development of Iranian nationality.

Later Iranian tradition considers *Auruuaṭ.aspa* (Mid. Pers. *Luhrāsp*, this form recalls *Lrouaspo*, the Bactrian form of Av. *Druuāspā*, goddess of horses, Skjærvø 2013c) and his son *Kauui Vištāspa* (Mid. Pers. *Wištāsp*) of the Gāθic circle to be descendants of the Kayanid dynasty and after an interregnum, they are depicted as successors of *Kay Husrōy* (e.g. Greater Bundahišn 35.34-35). This picture is not only evident in Middle Persian Mazdean literature from the late Sasanian period and later in the *Šāh-nāma* of Ferdowsī and other Perso-Arabic literature, but also in the early Sasanian Iranian tradition (see BeDuhn 2015 for reflections of Iranian epic and similar chronology in the Chester Beatty Kephalaia regarding the early Sasanian period). However, the internal logic of the Avestan texts and their remnants in Middle Persian literature is inconsistent with this chronological order. By the time of the foundation of the Sasanian Empire, the era of *Zaraθuštra* (Mid. Pers. *Zardušt*) was pivotal in the millennial view of Iranians toward time. The religious chronology was based on a mythological cosmic year of twelve millennia. The millenarian worldview in the Mazdean tradition seems to have fully developed by the end of the Achaemenid

supremacy and the disappointment resulting from the devastation of Alexander (Eddy 1961: 10-12; Boyce 1984; Kreyenbroek 2002). The 4th age of the cosmic year according to the Sasanian chronology commences at the beginning of the 10th millennium with the conversion of *Wištāsp* by Zardušt to conclude to a period of chaos before the coming of the first savior. Hence, the Sasanian administration displaced the time of Zaratuštra to avoid difficulties of millennial anticipation. The millennial calendar was squared with historical events reckoned according to the Seleucid era beginning in 312 BC (Shahbazi 1977). The invasion of Alexander and the consequent Hellenic hegemony created a break in the historical memory of Iranians, which provided the opportunity to mythologize and confuse the historical events prior to that. According to Yarshater (1971), the memory of Achaemenids was deliberately taken into oblivion in favor of East Iranian heroic cycles, which had the benefit of sanctioning by Mazdean sacred texts. As we shall see, there were time reckonings based on the era of the Kayanid dynasty, which was kept locally in East Iran. Therefore, we may assume the time of Zaratuštra was needed to become post-Kayanid as well to accommodate the millennial expectation. Or rather, the identification of Achaemenid *Vištāspa* with his Gāthic namesake deemed this postponing necessary. Post-dating of *Kaui Vištāspa*, compared to the Kayanid dynasty can also be associated with particular events of the Achaemenid period leading to the ascension of Darius I son of *Vištāspa* to the imperial throne. Such a notion can be deduced from assimilation of stories of Cyrus the great with that of *Kay Kōsrow* (Yarshater 1983: 388-389) and the pluralistic views of the former towards Iranian (and non-Iranian) religions and Darius's adoption of the Gāthic vision (see Skjærvø 2005 for evidence of this adoption). We may conclude that the context in which the date of Zaratuštra occurs in the Mazdean tradition is disputed and cannot be trusted (see also Shahbazi 2002).

There is internal evidence in the Avestan texts and the Iranian tradition that leads us to believe that the date of Zaratuštra, *Kaui Vištāspa* and his circle was much older than the Kayanid dynasty. In Frawardin Yašt, veneration of *fravašis* of the righteous after the first absolute human goes directly to Zaratuštra and his circle including his principle patron *Kaui Vištāspa*. The national Iranian material in Frawardin Yašt appears in a separate small section and seems to be intrusive. On the other hand, it is clear that ascribing the *Vištāspa* house of *Kaui* to the Kayanid dynasty in the later Iranian tradition was not easy. In the Šāh-nāma, the succession

of Kayanid dynasty by *Luhrāsp* (also *Mēnōg ī xrad* 26.62) was disputed among the heroes and aristocratic nobles of the Kayanid court. This depiction is reminiscent of the Sassanid court and can point to a falsification of the tradition in early Sassanid Iran. In fact, the advent of *Luhrāsp* brought about a dynastic discontinuity, which changes the theme of the story of *Šāh-nāma* (Wikander 1950: 327). No important event is reported in the reign of *Luhrāsp*, which shows that there was simply no information about him. Furthermore, in the story of *Fraŋrasiian*'s attempts to get a hold of *x^varənah*, it is emphasized that *x^varənah* belongs to Iranian peoples, born and unborn, and to *Zaraθuštra* (*x^varənō isō yaṭ asti airiianqm daxiiunqm zātanqm azātanqmca yaṭca ašaonō zaraθuštrahe* Yt. 19.56). Thus, *Fraŋrasiian* must have known *Zaraθuštra*. With *Fraŋrasiian* being contemporary of the Kayanid dynasty and particularly *Kauui Haosrauuah*, we may deduce that *Zaraθuštra* antedated the Kayanid dynasty. In *Dēnkard* (9.16.19), it is said that *Kauui Haosrauuah* produced an advance of *Zaraθuštra*'s religion of *Mazdā* worshipers and understands about it. This statement is in spite of the fact that, presumably based on official Sasanian chronology, he lived before *Zaraθuštra*. Apart from *Frawardin Yašt* discussed above, most of the legendary *Yašts* mention *Zaraθuštra*, *Kauui Vištāspa* and his circle at the end of a long list of national figures (Yt. 9, 5, 15, 17). This arrangement can be an indication of the mere addition of *Zaraθuštra*'s circle in these Young Avestan texts and evidence of *Zaraθuštrizing* attempts (see Skjærvø 1994 for the hymnic composition of *Yašts*). However, the case of *Ard Yašt* (Yt. 17) is interesting as the venerated deity is an inherited one, who at the same time plays an important role in the *Gāθās* and hence is heavily *Zaraθuštrized* (Skjærvø 1986). In this *Yašt*, *Zaraθuštra* appears at the beginning of the list as well as at the end, where he is mentioned along his patron *Kauui Vištāspa*. Therefore, the entirety of composition of legendary *Yašts* shows that *Zaraθuštra*, *Kauui Vištāspa* and his circle do not fit into the chronological scheme of national Iranian kings and heroes that *Yašts* depict. Other evidence comes from the lost Avestan *Čihrdād Nask*, for which there is a summary of its contents (*Dēnkard* VIII.13). After finishing the national legendary history of Iranians, including the Kayanids, *Čihrdād Nask* mentions the story of *Luhrāsp* and the *dahībed* "land-lord" *Kay Wištāsp* in a special report of many particulars of the lineage of Iran, Turan and Sarman (*Dēnkard* VIII.13.15). As the *Gāθic* phrase *naptiiaēšū nafšucā tūrahiiā uzjēn friiānahiiā aojīiaēšū* (Y. 46.12) suggests, *Kauui Vištāspa* belonged to a Turanian tribe. It is

possible that at some point, it was decided to consider Zaratuštra's patron as a national Iranian king, then his line of *kauuis* was said to represent a minor continuation of the Kayanid dynasty.

There is socio-cultural evidence that separates the era of the Gāthic *kauuis* from that of the Kayanid dynasty. The Gāthic society is primitive pastoral (see Lincoln 1981), while the Young Avestan society was peasantry (Vd. 3.4, 23-31). The Gāthās reflect a largely stone-age culture, an isolated Bronze Age community as it had familiarity with horse-drawn chariots (Av. *raiθī-* "charioteer", Y. 50.6-7). Lack of evidence of the tripartite society of the Bronze Age in the Gāthās led Boyce (1982) to believe that the primitive Gāthic society had a twofold division between herdsmen (who could become warriors upon need) and priests. However, he may have consciously depicted the inherited primordial PIE society based on the primordial twins **Manu* and **Yemo* in which **Trito*, "the third", the warrior, had not appeared yet (see Lincoln 1975 & 1976 for primordial twins and the third). In contrast to the Gāthic society, the socially advanced classes are present in the (Young) Avestan society (Skjærvø 1992). The original Young Avestan compositions of Yašts may correspond to the time of Kayanid dynasty and in particular *Kauui Haosrauuah*. He is the last and most praised king mentioned in the Avesta. References to his long-lasting life and noble progeny may indicate the contemporary nature of composition of his eulogy (Yt. 13.133-135; 19.74-76). By the time of *Kauui Haosrauuah*, the Iranian countries were united (*arša airiianqm daxiunqm xšaθrāi haṇkərətō haosrauua* "Haosrauuah the hero who put together Iranian countries into a dominion", Yt. 9.21). However, in the Gāthic society, there was no power beyond local chieftains (Christensen 1931: 29). Therefore, a time lapse of unknown duration had passed from the era of Zaratuštra and *Kauui Vištāspa* to that of the Kayanid dynasty.

Kauui Haosrauuah is depicted as he has equipped the Iranian peoples with kingdom (*xšaθrāi haṇkərəmō*, Yt. 5.49, 15.32). In other words, *Kauui Haosrauuah*'s specific task to Iranian peoples, which is the first and probably the only historical event, was the exercise of a type of power defined by *xšaθra-*. As Kellens (2005: 240) noted, it is with *Kauui Haosrauuah*, that the adjective *Airiia-* characterizes the largest of the social ensembles, the peoples in its plural form. This plural form shows that a nation out of a confederation of countries has been formed. The glory of the Kayanid dynasty and its association with Iranians also bears witness to such a notion (Yt. 19; see also discussion by Shahbazi 2005). These Iranian countries,

we may suppose, were what Mihr Yašt called *Airiiō.šaiiana*- “Iranian dwellings” (Yt. 10.13-14, following the translation by Gershevitch 1959: 78-81):

13 *yō paōirīiō mainīiauuō yazatō tarō harām āsnaōiti pauruuā. naēmāt amāšahe hū yaṭ auruuāṭ.aspahe, yō paōirīiō zaranīiō.pīsō srīrā barāšnauua gērāβnāiti adāt vīspām ādidāiti airīiō.šaiianām sōuuištō,*

14 ... *yahmīia āpō nāuuaiiā pērəθβiš xšaoδaṇha θβaxšənte āiškatəm pourutəmca mourum hārōiium gaomca suxδəm x’āirizəmāca*

13 [Miθra] who is the first supernatural to approach across the Harā in front of the immortal swift-horsed sun; who is the first to seize the beautiful golden mountain tops; from there the most mighty surveys the whole Iranian habitat,

14 ... where navigable rivers rush wide with a swell towards Parutian Iškata, Haraivian Margu, Sogdian Gava and Chorasmia.

While Harā is the mythical mountain in the middle of the world (Yt. 12.23), it also corresponds to a real mountain range that characterizes Av. *Airīianām vaējō* (Parthian *Aryān wežan*), which is the eastern Hindu Kush on the upper course of the Oxus River (see Grenet 2005 and 2015 for Avestan geography). On the mountainous nature of *Aryān wežan*, we have Manichean fragments of the Book of Giants (Henning 1943: 68-69 and 73): *Aryān wežan* was the region extending at the foot of Mount (Su)meru. Mount (Su)meru is nothing but the Indian designation of Harā Mountain as attested in Khotanese texts (Bailey 1979: 467). Thus, Harā is the mountain range of *Airīianām vaējō* “the homeland of Iranians” and “the first and best of places and habitations” (Vd. 1.2). The above stanzas of Mihr Yašt then reveal that *Airiiō.šaiiana* was the name given to the region of Harā Mountain, i.e. *Airīianām vaējō* and only by extension to mentioned countries on the northern side of Western Hindu Kush. In Sī-rōzag, *Kauui Haosrauuh* is associated with Mount Asnuuaṇt (Sī-rōzag 1.9 = 2.9 = Niyāyišn 5.5) which is in Harā Mountain. As mentioned above, the mansion of *Kauui Usan* was on top of Harā Mountain. The whereabouts of *Kay Kobād* (Av. *Kauui Kauuāta*) in Šāh-nāma is Harā Mountain as well (ed. Khaleghi-Motlagh 1987-2008, I: 338-341). In the reign of *Kay Kōsrow*, when enumerating different regions, Šāh-nāma mentions Bāmyān as the abode of Kayanids and the border of “Iran” (ed. Khaleghi-Motlagh

1987-2008, IV: 72). Ḥamza Eṣfahāni reports that *Kay Kōsrow* used to live in Balk (1967: 25). Therefore, texts of different periods agree on the origin of Kayanid dynasty close to Harā Mountain. If we assume that their historicity is possible, then the Kayanid dynasty seems to have started with a local chieftainship and by the time of *Kauui Haosrauuh*, it dominated the entire Iranian dwelling lands on northern slopes of western Hindu Kush, hence the term *Airiiō.šaiiana*.

We may then rephrase Christensen's picture of the "historical records" of Yašt as follows: In the lands located between the central deserts of Iran and the Indus basin, the sedentary people descending from a mixture of Proto-Iranians and indigenous people of the Oxus Civilization established a monarchy under kings designated by the ancient title of *kauui*. One of these *kauuis*, *Kauui Haosrauuh* united under his rule all the Iranian territories (Yt. 5.49; 9.21; 15.32). He had a powerful enemy, *Fraṇrasiian*, chief of nomadic Tūiriias, who had put to death his father *Siiāuuaršan* (Yt. 17.42; 19.77). *Fraṇrasiian*, however, was previously an ally of Iranians who killed one of their enemies (Av. *Zainigāuš*, Yt. 19.93; Dēnkard VII.2.68-69; Bundahišn 33.9). Nevertheless, *Kauui Haosrauuh* went into war with *Fraṇrasiian*, a fight that marked a great memory of heroic deeds and many legends were created out of it (e.g. Yt. 5.53-59 on the encounter of Tusa and Vaēsaka, the Tūiriia, at the gates of Kaṇha; many historical episodes from Arsacid period are laid back into this war). This epic story is heroic and legendary, but not mythical.

Having established the possible historicity of the Kayanids from internal Avestan and Mazdean sources, we may turn into external evidence. The legendary Yašt claim that *Kauui Haosrauuh* put together Iranian countries. On the other hand, Avesta often refers to *Kauui Haosrauuh* by the lake *Čaēčasta* where he kills *Fraṇrasiian* (Yt. 5.49-51; 9.17-23). As Gershevitch (1974: 55) showed, this lake is to be equated with Lake Čāč, i.e. lake of *Ǩwārazm* (present day Aral Lake). This means that we may seek for a pre-Achaemenid Chorasmian monarchy. Indeed, we have two pieces of evidence in this regard. According to Bīrūnī, a native of *Ǩwārazm*, the people of *Ǩwārazm* dated the beginning of the colonization of their country, 980 years before Alexander (i.e. the beginning of the Seleucid Era), more precisely in 1292 BCE. Afterwards, they adopted as the epoch of an era the event of the coming of *Siāvaš* down to *Ǩwārazm* and the rule of *Kay Kōsrow* and of his descendants over the country, dating from the time when he immigrated and extended his sway over the empire of the

Turnanian people. This happened 92 years after the colonization of the country, i.e. 1200 BCE (Sachau 1879: 40-41). This report also remarks that *Ḳwārazm* was originally a land of Turanians. Then, Iranians colonized this area after the defeat of *Afrāsīāb*. This report is then commensurate with the country list in the first chapter of *Vidēvdād*, in which Chorasemia was not listed as one of the first created lands. The archeological evidence is also in line with this picture. Remains of Bronze Age Tazabag'yab culture in *Ḳwārazm* from the middle and late second millennium BCE have links with the Indo-Iranian nomadic Timber Frame and Andronovo cultures. This nomadic background is reminiscent of Avestan *Tūrrias*. On the other hand, some settlements in *Ḳwārazm* reveal infusion of the southern urban cultures. The settlement at *Kuyusaï 2* in the Oxus delta dated to the 12th-11th centuries BCE has a substantial number of wheel-made vessels, clearly brought from the sedentary areas of southern Turkmenia (Vainberg 1979: 15 and 48). The local dating of *Ḳwārazm*, separate from the imperial dating system of Iran, reported by a native of *Ḳwārazm* may be trusted as genuine. Moreover, the archeological evidence is in agreement with the events surrounding this dating.

The unification process of Iranian peoples in the time of *Kauii Haos-rauuah* and the possible continuation of his kingdom by his descendants claimed by *Bīrūnī* seems to find its way into Greek reports of Achaemenid period. According to Herodotus (3.117), the plain shut in all sides by a mountain range with five openings, lying on the confines of Chorasemians, Hyrcanians, Parthians, Sarangians (Drangians), and Thamanaeans (Perhaps the foothills of the Hindu Kush, region of Merv and Herat) belonged to Chorasemians in pre-Achaemenid times. According to Hecataeus (Fr 292 f.; apud Atheneus, II, p. 70A-B; Jacoby 1957: 38), the territory of the Chorasemian kingdom extended beyond the lowlands of Chorasemia to include the mountains of eastern Parthia. Based on these testimonies, we may note that, originally, Chorasemians were located to the south of modern Merv, Av. *Nisāya* "settlement" and then later they moved, and that the direction of their migration must have been north, something in accordance to the testimony of *Bīrūnī*. In accordance with this northern advancement of sedentary civilization in a northern direction, we may note that Chorasemia was not included in the first 15 lands created by Ahura Mazdā out of *Airiianəm vaējō* in three directions (Vd. 1). The Pre-Achaemenid Chorasemian kingdom covered not only the 16th satrapy of the Persian Empire (Parthia, Chorasemia, Sogdiana, Aria), but also partly the 14th satrapy (Sarangians,

Thamanaeans) (Herodotus, 3.93; cf. Markwart 1901: 9ff.; Henning 1951: 42). The Iranian dwellings enumerated in Mihr Yašt overlaps for the most part with that of pre-Achaemenid Chorasmian kingdom. The Mihr Yašt's list of countries may well have been a territory of a unified Iranian confederacy, which is alluded to in the same Yašt where the assembly of fiefdoms of lands (*daxīiunqm fratəmaδātō* Yt. 10.18) is mentioned headed by *vīspanqm daxīiunqm daiŋhupaitīm* (Yt 10.145; see discussion by Gershevitch 1959: 296-299). Therefore, external sources in agreement with internal Avestan and Pahlavi sources lead us to believe that an Iranian monarchy was established by defeating the nomads who were called Tūirias in Avesta in the region of Chorasmia, whose territory covered central Hindu Kush area of East Iran.

Conclusion

The title of *kavi* despite its divergent significance in Iranian and Indian traditions seems to originate from the same root, which is an inheritance from late-Proto-Indo-European period. It seems that the term *kavi* designated the mythical insightful artisan who played an instrumental role by fashioning the weapon with special knowledge for slaying the dragon or defeating the aliens. Such a knowledge was considered supernal and led to attributing magical power to him. Through transformation of one version of the dragon slaying myth, the primordial *kavi* obtained verbal and poetic attributes in India, while retaining magical powers. On the other hand, the smith functionality was kept alive in oral Iranian epic tradition, while his magical power was cited by Avestan composers and probably abhorred from Mazdean point of view. Through association with metal weapons, the concept of *kauui* attained warlike, heroic and consequently royal character. As such, in the early days of Iranian culture, reflected in the Gāθās, we find local rulers with the title of *kauuis*. On the other hand, *Kauui Usan* as the primordial *kauui*, became a primordial sovereign for Young Avestan people on par with Yima. His smith functionality gradually diverged from him to become a separate personality known as *Kāva* in oral Iranian tradition. In the Young Avestan period, we find a dynasty of *kauuis*, known as Kayanids. This dynasty started their rule in the homeland of Iranians, but extended their power to other Iranian countries reaching its climax by the time of *Kauui Haosrauuaḥ*. This dynasty assumed the primordial mythical *Kauui Usan* as its eponym. Based on Avestan and Mazdean internal

evidence as well as testimonies of ancient classical historians and the mediaeval historian Bīrūnī, it was argued that such a dynasty and especially events leading to the unification of the early Iranian countries and the victory over Tūriia nomads could be historical events of the late second millennium BCE.

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